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Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance: strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations

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Special economic, humanitarian and disaster relief assistance

Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations**Report of the Secretary-General***Summary*

The present report has been prepared pursuant to General Assembly resolution 46/182, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report annually to the Assembly and the Economic and Social Council on the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance. The report is also submitted in response to Assembly resolution 69/135 and Economic and Social Council resolution 2014/13. The period covered by the report is January to December 2014.

The report describes major humanitarian trends and challenges and analyses a number of thematic issues, including meeting capacity and resource challenges through humanitarian effectiveness, risk management approaches, changes to humanitarian financing, adherence to international humanitarian law and principles, and addressing access and protection concerns. The report provides an overview of current efforts to improve humanitarian coordination and response.

* A/70/50.



I. Introduction

1. Humanitarian responses to level 3 emergencies in the Central African Republic, Iraq, the Philippines,¹ South Sudan and the Syrian Arab Republic, and the continuation of other crises that caused tremendous suffering dominated 2014. More than 76 million people were targeted to receive humanitarian assistance in 31 countries and nearly \$11 billion in funding was received for inter-agency appeals.² The continuing high level of demand for relief, the collective inability of the international community to resolve protracted conflicts and the convergence of various global trends have led to more frequent and intense humanitarian crises and have severely hindered the operational and financial capacity of Governments and humanitarian organizations to respond adequately.

2. By the end of 2014, the number of people internally displaced by armed conflict and generalized violence stood at 38 million, as reported by the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre. According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, by mid-2014 the global refugee population was 18.1 million.³

3. The Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters recorded 271 natural disasters, which claimed an estimated 6,400 lives, affected 102 million people and caused damage worth over \$85 billion. Asia continued to be the most affected region, with almost half the recorded natural disasters occurring in the region, accounting for 80 per cent of all deaths.

4. In 2014, Member States, Observers and public entities contributed more than \$479 million to the Central Emergency Response Fund — the highest-ever annual total. The Emergency Relief Coordinator allocated \$461 million for life-saving humanitarian activities in 45 countries and territories. More than 90 per cent went to complex emergencies and 10 per cent was allocated in response to natural disasters. Country-based pooled funds received more than \$500 million from 22 Member States and allocated \$453 million to humanitarian actors in complex emergencies and natural disasters in 17 countries.⁴

5. In 2014, the continued lack of compliance with international humanitarian law and human rights law and accountability for violations was of particular concern. Nearly 80 per cent of humanitarian work takes place in countries and regions affected by conflict. On a daily basis, non-State actors and Governments directly attack civilians and deny assistance to those in need, in violation of international humanitarian law, and with impunity. It has become increasingly difficult for humanitarians to gain access to those in need and to meet the protection needs of people.

6. In addition to continued and strengthened adherence to international humanitarian law and human rights law, while addressing the political and underlying conditions that cause and prolong humanitarian needs, more can be done by all actors to address humanitarian challenges. Improved humanitarian

¹ The level 3 designation ended in mid-February 2014 for the Philippines.

² Data as at 2 April 2014 from the financial tracking service, available from <http://fts.unocha.org>.

³ Year-end data for 2014 was not available at the time of submission of the present report.

⁴ As reported to the Financial Tracking Service as at 1 April 2015.

effectiveness, risk management and better leveraging of humanitarian financing could help meet increasing needs. However, without a substantially stronger political commitment to addressing the underlying causes of humanitarian crises, it will not be possible to cover constantly increasing needs.

7. The World Humanitarian Summit, the post-2015 development framework and the disaster risk reduction framework, a new climate agreement and a new urban agenda are all unique opportunities to better address the global challenges common to development and humanitarian action.

II. Overview of humanitarian emergencies in 2014

A. Complex emergencies

8. In South Sudan, the humanitarian crisis deteriorated significantly, owing to continued violence, human rights violations and internal displacement. Nearly 2 million people fled their homes, with about 1.5 million persons being internally displaced and some 500,000 refugees fleeing to neighbouring countries, which were already struggling with emergencies of their own, such as the floods in the refugee camps in Ethiopia. Coordinated humanitarian action contributed to averting famine, but about 3.2 million people faced acute food insecurity before the harvest season. Chronic needs compounded the situation with continuing high rates of malnutrition, vulnerability to outbreaks of disease, violations of international humanitarian law and human rights abuses, including widespread gender-based violence.

9. In the Sudan, 450,000 people were newly displaced by the conflict in Darfur, as the Government scaled up operations against armed groups. Large-scale clashes between tribal groups also continued in certain areas. That pushed the estimated total number of internally displaced persons in Darfur above 2.5 million. Operations by Government forces in areas of South Kordofan and Blue Nile controlled by the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N) also intensified, compounding the suffering of hundreds of thousands of people remained cut off from cross-line access. At least 120,000 South Sudanese refugees arrived in the Sudan during 2014. Despite increased needs, the operating environment for humanitarian actors remained extremely challenging, owing to restrictions on access and worsening security.

10. In Somalia, for the first time since the 2011 famine, the number of people affected by food insecurity and emergency increased, from 860,000 to 1.1 million, owing to drought, continued conflict, the restricted flow of commercial goods as a result of military operations and surging food prices. There are currently some 3 million people in need of humanitarian assistance, 1.1 million internally displaced persons and nearly 1 million refugees in neighbouring countries.

11. More than half the population of the Central African Republic, 2.5 million people, needed urgent humanitarian assistance in 2014. The situation faced by ethnic and religious minorities remained highly precarious. Over 891,000 people are internally displaced or refugees in neighbouring countries.

12. In Nigeria and neighbouring countries, the impact of Boko Haram's brutal tactics led to a dramatic worsening of the humanitarian situation, resulting in a refugee and returnee influx and the overall internal displacement of at least

1.2 million people, as at 6 March 2015. The limited or complete lack of access to affected populations in north-eastern Nigeria has restricted the scope of the humanitarian response. Over 200,000 people fled to the Niger, Cameroon and Chad, according to UNHCR. The deterioration in the security situation in the Lake Chad area linked to the cross-border nature of Boko Haram activities also triggered internal displacements in the three neighbouring countries, including between 100,000-150,000 internally displaced persons in Cameroon.⁵

13. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, there were 2.7 million internally displaced persons by the end of 2014. In Katanga Province alone, 180,000 people were displaced as a result of continued fighting and insecurity. Gender-based violence remains rampant. The countrywide chronic malnutrition rate hovers around 43 per cent, while there is an 11 per cent acute malnutrition rate.

14. In the Sahel region, some 20 million people remained at risk of food insecurity and that number reached 24 million during the lean season. More than 5 million children were affected by acute malnutrition, including 1.5 million suffering from severe malnutrition. In Mali, approximately 2 million people were affected by food insecurity. Some 82,000 internally displaced persons and over 143,000 refugees remained in Mauritania, the Niger and Burkina Faso. Gains that had been made in restoring State authority and public infrastructure in Gao, Mopti and Timbuktu eroded owing to military confrontations between armed groups, resulting in the abuse and pillaging of the local population and creating new humanitarian needs and displacements.

15. During the reporting period, the number of people in need of humanitarian assistance in the Syrian Arab Republic increased from 10.8 million to 12.2 million and the number of internally displaced persons increased from 6.4 million to 7.6 million. By the end of the year, over 3.7 million Syrians were refugees in neighbouring countries. Violence worsened and essential services were interrupted for millions. Access to 4.8 million people in hard-to-reach locations remained challenging.

16. In the occupied Palestinian territory, around 1,500 civilian Palestinians, including more than 550 children, were killed and 100,000 were left without a home during the Gaza conflict. In Israel, five civilians, including a child, as well as a security guard, were killed. In the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, a record number of some 1,200 Palestinians were displaced owing to home demolitions by the Israeli authorities, while settlement and settler activity continued. The rise of casualties during law enforcement operations raised concerns over the use of excessive force and collective punishment. Movement and access restrictions continued to undermine livelihood and access to services.

17. The situation in Yemen remains volatile and extremely fragile, leading to ever-increasing humanitarian challenges. In 2014, conflicts caused more displacement: almost 100,000 people were displaced, while more than 300,000 people remained in protracted internal displacement. Political turmoil and financial challenges led to a further deterioration in already weak basic services, leaving millions of people without access to health care, safe water or proper sanitation. There are some 257,650 registered refugees in Yemen. Some 91,600 people reached Yemen by sea and approximately 250 lives were lost at sea.

⁵ As at 6 March 2015.

18. In Iraq, 5.2 million people were in need of emergency assistance, including 2.2 million people located in hard-to-reach areas and 2.1 million internally displaced persons. Iraq hosted 235,000 Syrian refugees. Human rights violations were rampant. Protracted political stalemates, a collapse of the Iraqi security forces and widespread corruption have crippled the Iraqi economy and the delivery of services.

19. In Libya, the humanitarian situation has deteriorated since fighting erupted in mid-2014. In particular, the widespread use of explosive weapons in populated areas has taken a heavy toll on civilians, causing death, injury, trauma, destruction of essential infrastructure and displacement. There are approximately 400,000 internally displaced persons, many of whom have been displaced more than once owing to the widening conflict.

20. In Myanmar regular and sustained access to people affected by conflict and communal tensions remained challenging. Two and a half years after communal violence in Rakhine State, close to 140,000 people remained displaced. In Kachin, humanitarian access to areas beyond government control continued to be difficult, with fighting between the Myanmar Army and the Kachin Independence Army escalating at the end of the year.

21. In the Philippines, clan feuds and fighting between the armed forces of the Philippines and armed groups continued in Mindanao, where more than 120,000 were newly displaced. In Zamboanga City, nearly 20,000 people remained in evacuation centres and transition sites while at least 11,000 people were with host communities. Inadequate shelter and water, sanitation and hygiene facilities in evacuation centres have contributed to poor health and nutrition conditions, especially among children.

22. In Ukraine, the conflict between government forces and separatists in the east of the country triggered a humanitarian crisis, with more than 4,771 deaths and the displacement of over 1.2 million people, of whom some 593,600 have entered neighbouring countries since the beginning of the conflict. Both government forces and separatists have fired explosive weapons into populated areas, killing or injuring large numbers of civilians, causing the destruction of homes and public buildings and triggering extensive displacement. Those remaining in conflict-affected areas, particularly in densely populated urban areas, have suffered extreme hardship and difficulty in accessing basic life-saving services and education services.

23. In Afghanistan, 164,000 people were displaced by the ongoing conflict, bringing the total number to 805,000. In Pakistan, approximately 1.6 million people remain displaced, of whom some 700,000 were displaced in 2014 alone, owing to the conflict in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. An additional 39,000 families were displaced to Afghanistan from Pakistan.

24. In Haiti, a 53 per cent reduction in the number of cholera cases was observed, compared with 2013. However, a surge of 17,000 cases in the last quarter of 2014 led to almost 200 deaths. Since the start of the epidemic in October 2010, 725,600 cases and 8,813 deaths have been reported. The number of internally displaced persons has dropped 95 per cent since July 2010 to about 80,000. However, in the 105 registered camps for internally displaced person, living conditions remain harsh in terms of access to water and sanitation.

B. Disasters associated with natural hazards

25. During the first six months of 2014, the Asia and Pacific regions experienced the highest number of storms in the past five years. The number of storms increased by 70 per cent, with severe impacts in several countries, including Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, India, Myanmar, Pakistan, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Viet Nam and the Pacific region. In Sri Lanka, for example, 22 out of the 25 districts were affected by severe floods, which had an impact on an estimated 1.1 million people.

26. However, the human toll and economic losses were much lower in 2014 than in 2013, owing to improvements in preparedness measures and early warning systems. For instance, prior to cyclone Hudhud striking the east coast of India, the pre-emptive evacuation of some 500,000 people minimized the number of fatalities. Typhoon Hagupit made landfall in the Philippines on 6 December and affected more than 4.1 million people. Fortunately, drawing on lessons learned from typhoon Haiyan the previous year, the early action and pre-emptive evacuations undertaken by the national authorities were applauded for saving many lives and effectively responding to urgent humanitarian needs.

27. In the Greater Horn of Africa, over 12.8 million people suffered from acute food insecurity, resulting from two consecutive poor rainy seasons, ongoing conflicts in Somalia, South Sudan and the Sudan and soaring food prices.

28. In Southern Africa, nine tropical cyclones were recorded between October 2013 and May 2014, of which three made landfall affecting 383,300 people and killing 117. In Comoros, on 2 April, the Government declared a regional emergency as the storms followed a 4.8 magnitude earthquake, displacing more than 7,000 people and damaging or destroying more than 900 homes. In all, 453,300 people were affected by floods and storms across the region.

29. Natural disasters also affected 4.6 million people in Chad, including 772,000 people by drought and 206,000 people by floods. Drought and floods affected rural communities, primarily farmers and herders, thereby affecting livelihoods and food security countrywide.

30. On 13 March 2015, tropical cyclone Pam, a highly destructive category 5 cyclone, struck Vanuatu. There were 11 confirmed fatalities and 166,600 people were affected, 75,000 of whom were in need of shelter and 110,000 left without access to safe drinking water. Initial assessment reports confirmed destruction ranging from 20 to 90 per cent of houses, schools, clinics, churches and crops on all 22 affected islands. With a heavy reliance on subsistence farming, the destruction of food gardens and loss of livestock has left households with no alternative food source. The destruction of banana plantations will have a significant social and economic impact and on long-term food security.

C. Ebola emergency response

31. In 2014, the outbreak of the Ebola virus affected Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. Health structures that were already weak suffered the greatest impact and nearly collapsed: for months vaccinations were halted, death tolls from other health conditions rose and routine maternal health care was impeded. The closure of

schools left more than 5 million children without education for months. By the end of 2014, the outbreak had left thousands of children orphaned, killed breadwinners and caregivers and threatened livelihoods. Survivors were left traumatized psychologically and with continuing health needs, with many unable to return home owing to stigma. Malnutrition and food insecurity — already prevalent in those countries before the outbreak — are expected to increase. Concerns over protection include the displacement of entire villages, induced by fear of the disease, and security measures at border posts and around quarantined areas.

32. A wide variety of actors took part in the response, with different response systems, networks and providers, national Governments and the international community coming together to respond jointly. National and international non-governmental organizations, particularly Médecins sans frontières and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, mobilized early on. National private sectors also deployed their know-how, understanding of the local context and capabilities. The United Nations Mission for Ebola Emergency Response (UNMEER) was established on 19 September 2014 as a temporary measure to lead the international response. Hours after the United Nations decided to establish UNMEER, a joint United Nations disaster assessment and coordination team was sent to Liberia to assess the response to the outbreak. Over 175 organizations were involved in response programmes in the three high-transmission countries to stop the outbreak, treat the infected, ensure the provision of essential services, preserve stability and prevent the outbreak from spreading to unaffected countries.

III. Effectiveness, financing and risk management

33. Almost 25 years after the adoption of General Assembly resolution 46/182 and the establishment of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, a record 33 emergencies and crises, covered by appeals, are stretching the capacity of the humanitarian system to its limit. While the more than \$11 billion provided for 2014 through inter-agency appeals was an all-time high, so too was the \$7.4 billion shortfall, highlighting the need to make the best use of available resources. Megatrends, such as climate change and environmental degradation, food security, water scarcity, population growth and urbanization, are leading to ever more vulnerability and exposure to hazards. Furthermore, crises are becoming more protracted, with 78 per cent of humanitarian spending by the members of the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development going to protracted emergencies. Humanitarian appeals last for an average of seven years, and six countries (Chad, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, occupied Palestinian territory, Somalia and Sudan) have had appeals for 10 consecutive years. The Central African Republic, Iraq, South Sudan and the Syrian Arab Republic account for 70 per cent of funding requests for 2015 — all crises that are likely to have a humanitarian impact over the coming years in the absence of a definitive political solution.

34. Meanwhile, with the global economy tripling since 1992, many Governments have improved their capacity to handle crises and are therefore requesting assistance less frequently, preferring the international humanitarian system to work in a more tailored manner to fill specific gaps, provide specific services, or further develop national expertise. There are many more actors, including national and local civil

society actors and private sector companies which are confident about what they are doing and equipped to put their capacities to good use. The number and diversity of those actors pose a challenge to coherence, but can also be an opportunity to increase effectiveness if all actors work together towards a shared goal.

A. Humanitarian effectiveness

35. Meeting the needs of the affected population should be the focus of any humanitarian response. The capacities of the various responders, whether Governments, local or national civil society actors, or partners in the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, should be leveraged towards that goal. To make the necessary cooperation work, the particular context, including the needs, drivers of need and available capacities to respond, should be taken into account. The size and shape a response takes should be customized for the specific context, with multilateral actors engaging in relation to an accurate understanding of the capacities already at hand to meet needs.

36. In pursuing effective humanitarian action, the perspective of each actor also has to be considered. Some prioritize building trust, relationships and capacity to prepare for and respond to disasters, while many focus on aspects of delivery, such as efficiency, coverage, timeliness and relevance. For others, effectiveness means improved flexibility and the capacity to align services with needs, requiring greater efforts to understand the needs and capacities of affected communities. It will be necessary to anticipate how emerging trends and challenges, such as technology, the increased number and capacities of middle-income countries and the number of new partners, will change the way needs are met.

37. Despite the varying perspectives, common ideas are emerging as to what effective responses require. First, there is a critical need to maximize resources and expertise by connecting more predictably the many actors and systems involved in humanitarian response. The consequences of not linking those emerging capacities include the likelihood of a fragmented response and missed opportunities to strengthen humanitarian action in a more sustainable manner.

38. Second, the aim of international humanitarian actors should be to complement, not substitute, national actors. While in many crises, international humanitarian actors will still play a critical role in providing assistance and protection measures to people in need, Member States are increasingly requesting more technical support, expertise, standards and best practices from United Nations agencies to support, validate or strengthen their own efforts. Given the particular needs in a given context, the role of international humanitarian actors may contract or expand in relation to the needs of Governments and the capacities of non-governmental national actors, including the private sector. In some situations, that may involve a call for system-wide scale-up triggered by the level 3 designation. In other cases, the international humanitarian system may play a different or more limited role, acting as a broker to connect various partners, as a service provider for the Government, supporting coordination, or supporting the development of a national response capacity. The goal should be to build capacity at the most local level possible, thereby lessening the need for large-scale international responses in the future.

39. Third, the goals that are shared among international humanitarian actors must include a clear exit strategy, with clear benchmarks to signal the phase-out of humanitarian operations. Such benchmarks should be part of the joint planning with national actors and those outside the humanitarian community, to ensure that the different actors work together to achieve a shared set of objectives, with each contributing according to their role and capacities. That implies a longer-term, outcome-oriented approach that responds to real time frames and the fluidity of needs, including better linkages with development, peacebuilding and climate change agendas.

B. Humanitarian financing

40. While it is clear that full and predictable funding for humanitarian appeals remains essential, it is also clear that the humanitarian financing architecture must evolve to remain effective. The approach must address the problem not just by increasing humanitarian funding, but by taking measures to improve the efficiency of humanitarian response, prioritizing available resources for the most urgent needs and strengthening links to development financing mechanisms to build the resilience of vulnerable populations before, during and after crises.

41. To that end, it is necessary for humanitarian and development actors to work together to transition responsibilities at an early stage, to ensure that humanitarian funds are retained for other emergencies. Under the workplan of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee task team on humanitarian financing, the Catholic Agency for Overseas Development, World Vision and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), with financial support from FAO and Germany, launched the future humanitarian financing dialogues in 2014. The solution is not only to attract more funding and to improve the ways humanitarian partners spend those funds, but to develop new norms, whereby other actors commit to taking on responsibilities for underlying risks and long-term chronic needs.

42. Funding needs to be more flexible to allow for a complementary approach in addressing immediate needs, protracted crises and the underlying causes of crises. To implement the change that is required, the current humanitarian planning cycles, which are one year in length, are beginning to move to longer planning periods. In 2015, for example, 10 of the 33 appeals include multi-year plans. Donors should be encouraged to commit to flexible funding for multi-year appeals and bridge the divide between humanitarian and development financing.

43. To make recommendations for bringing about necessary change, the Secretary-General has decided to appoint a high-level panel on humanitarian financing, with the aim of engaging with the discussions on the post-2015 financing for development and informing the World Humanitarian Summit to be held in May 2016. While building on the findings of various stakeholders, the panel is expected to produce recommendations based around three questions — How can the growing gap be narrowed by mobilizing more from both Member States, and through innovative funding mechanisms? How can the predictability of funding be increased? And how can the humanitarian system use the resources available for the greatest impact?

C. Risk management approach

44. Managing the risk of humanitarian challenges and taking action before they become large-scale crises must be a priority for all actors. Of the 50 countries at the highest risk of undergoing crises, according to the Index for Risk Management, 38 have made an inter-agency humanitarian appeal in the last 10 years. A risk-based approach is needed to save more lives today and avoid crises tomorrow, while reducing costs, especially in protracted crises. Two major systemic changes are needed for a shift towards a risk management approach to crises.

45. First, it is imperative for humanitarian responses to be planned over a multi-year framework of at least three to five years and linked with development planning processes that go beyond the cycles of the United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks, while integrating all key development stakeholders, including Governments, regional organizations and international financial institutions. Current multi-year humanitarian strategic plans must gradually evolve from multiple single years to truly transformative multi-year action. Based on a joint understanding of the risk landscape, multi-year plans should include dynamic benchmarks that are linked to context-specific milestones and clear objectives that allow for a progressive transition from humanitarian response to local, national and development partners, while building their capacity to manage risks at various levels. Such an approach will better reflect the length of many crises, while also ensuring that humanitarian actors, in synergy with development actors, can make more concerted efforts towards sustainable solutions.

46. Second, the short term nature of humanitarian financing is a major barrier for undertaking effective risk-informed multi-year humanitarian planning. Raising money on a yearly basis for crises that are protracted is not cost-effective and does not allow humanitarian agencies to benefit from the potential efficiencies to be gained from multi-year planning. Resource mobilization over a multi-year framework that is also aligned with development funding mechanisms and financing for climate change adaptation should therefore be prioritized.

47. To achieve that, it is necessary to improve existing risk management tools for humanitarian programming, which are currently more oriented towards meeting immediate humanitarian needs. That will include building greater complementarity between common assessments, based on a shared understanding of risk, such as the humanitarian needs overview and the common country assessments. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee emergency response preparedness approach is also an important tool for identifying risk in the preparedness phase, while the common framework for preparedness has been agreed with the United Nations Development Group and the Inter-Agency Secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction to achieve more synergy between humanitarian and development action.

48. Risk management tools should allow for better use of baseline information and risk analysis, including analysis of the underlying causes of crises and the different risk exposures of affected populations, such as gender inequality, exclusion and vulnerabilities. In that regard, the further development of established tools, such as the Index for Risk Management, to include more data disaggregated by sex and age and region- and country-specific criteria is a welcome development. In order to take effective risk mitigation measures prior to a crisis, humanitarian and development

actors need to use risk indicators to push for action before, during and after crises, including as outlined in the Sendai Declaration and Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030. Early action should prioritize response options, promoting early recovery approaches, especially in protracted and cyclical crises. In that way, multi-year action will effectively promote greater complementarity between humanitarian and development actors and resilience building.

IV. Serving the needs of people in conflict

49. In armed conflicts around the world, the fundamental tenets of international humanitarian law continue to be undermined at every turn. Parties to conflicts deliberately or recklessly kill hundreds of civilians every day, often with impunity. Far from being collateral damage, civilian death or suffering is often the very purpose of attacks, sieges and denial of aid. Explosive weapons are regularly used in densely populated areas, in the full knowledge that they will inevitably kill, injure or displace large numbers of civilians and destroy homes and infrastructure. Direct attacks on civilian infrastructure, including schools and hospitals, once taboo, have become a method of warfare. Parties to conflicts repeatedly and often arbitrarily obstruct or deny humanitarian access to people in need. Attacks against humanitarian and health-care workers and facilities have reached record levels. Overall, violence and other forms of persecution force an average of 23,000 people per day to flee their homes. The number of people experiencing displacement as a result of conflict exceeds 50 million, which is an unprecedented number since the Second World War. In that context, humanitarian organizations find it difficult to undertake their work. Improving compliance with international humanitarian law and promoting accountability for violations are urgently needed to better protect civilians from the devastating effects of armed conflicts.

A. Humanitarian access

50. Millions of people across a range of conflicts remain without adequate access to assistance, owing to the hostilities, to insecurity and to the obstacles put in place by the parties to those conflicts. Humanitarian access to people in need is a prerequisite for effective humanitarian action, including needs assessments, protection and the provision of assistance. Every time humanitarian convoys are unnecessarily delayed or prevented from reaching their destination, consent for relief operations is arbitrarily withheld, or aid is destroyed and warehouses looted, hundreds of thousands of people are deprived of urgently needed food, water, medicine or shelter. As in previous years, in the period covered by the present report, some Governments have used cumbersome administrative procedures to restrict the movement of humanitarian convoys and the delivery of essential items. Parties to conflicts have the primary responsibility for the protection and well-being of populations under their control. They should be held accountable when they fail to uphold their responsibilities. Impartial humanitarian organizations must be allowed to carry out relief operations when the needs of the population are not met.

51. While the consent of affected States is required before relief operations may be undertaken, such consent may not be arbitrarily withheld. The affected State does not have unfettered discretion to withhold consent to impartial humanitarian

operations. It is increasingly recognized that the arbitrary withholding of consent to relief operations is a violation of international law that gives rise to international responsibility for the State withholding consent. All Member States have an important role to play in promoting compliance by State and non-State actors with the rules regulating the provision of humanitarian assistance and ensuring that there is accountability when those rules are violated.

52. Once relief actions have been agreed to by affected States, the relevant parties must allow and facilitate the rapid and unimpeded passage of relief consignments, equipment and personnel. Administrative procedures and other formalities must not prevent the timely delivery of humanitarian assistance in a principled manner and should be simplified and expedited.

53. For humanitarian actors to be able to reach people in need, it is essential that their activities be exclusively humanitarian in nature and comply with the principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence, and be perceived as doing so. When parties to a conflict, or other stakeholders, blur the lines between humanitarian assistance and political objectives, that can impair lifesaving humanitarian operations and impact negatively on how humanitarian actors are perceived and their ability to protect, reach and provide assistance and services to people in need.

B. Safety and security

54. Preliminary records from the Aid Worker Security Database show that 270 aid workers were killed, kidnapped or seriously wounded in 2014. The largest proportion of aid workers killed (67 out of 105) were victims of targeted attacks or crossfire while delivering assistance. Improvised explosive devices and complex attacks accounted for 20 per cent of aid workers killed. Ninety per cent of the victims (244 out of 270) were national staff, who account for the majority of humanitarian workers.⁶ Those estimates mark a significant improvement compared with 2013 (155 aid workers killed). However, the overall situation remains highly unsatisfactory, with repeated attacks against humanitarian and health-care personnel across conflicts.

55. Violence against humanitarian workers and health-care personnel can have a devastating impact as it disrupts the provision of assistance and essential services. In the most serious cases, it can oblige humanitarian organizations to close health facilities or suspend the delivery of assistance. In 2014, the deliberate denial of impartial health-care services to sick and wounded combatants and civilians was also observed and medical items were removed from aid shipments. Attacks directed at health-care personnel, facilities, transport, equipment and other services exclusively engaged in medical duties constitute serious violations of international humanitarian law and, potentially, war crimes. Parties to conflicts must be held accountable for attacks against humanitarian and health-care personnel.

⁶ As at 23 March 2015, the figures for 2014 had not been finalized.

C. Explosive weapons in populated areas

56. The use of explosive weapons in populated areas remains a serious challenge for the protection of civilians. In 2014, when explosive weapons were used in populated areas, 92 per cent of the casualties were civilians.⁷ The use of explosive weapons is often a primary cause of civilian deaths, injuries and displacement. It also has a severe long-term humanitarian and development impact. People injured by explosive weapons require emergency and specialist medical treatment that often does not exist, in part because hospitals and clinics may have been damaged or destroyed by explosive weapons. Schools are also damaged or destroyed, as well as commercial property and the means of production, thus devastating livelihoods. Explosive remnants of war pose a threat until they are safely removed. The impact on post-conflict reconstruction requirements and costs is dramatic.

57. International humanitarian law contains important provisions for the protection of civilians in armed conflict, including from the effects of explosive weapons. While it does not prohibit the use of explosive weapons per se, in many cases the use of explosive weapons in densely populated areas constitutes unlawful conduct because of their indiscriminate impact. The use of barrel bombs, cluster munitions or explosives with wide-area effects in populated areas will be likely to kill large numbers of civilians and destroy homes and infrastructure, often in direct violation of the fundamental principles of distinction and proportionality, yet seems to be accepted as a normal method of warfare. Putting a stop to such unacceptable practices is a collective responsibility. Strict compliance with international humanitarian law by all parties to conflicts would significantly contribute to protecting civilians from the effects of explosive weapons.

58. The development of policy standards that limit the use of explosive weapons in populated areas would provide much-needed protection to civilians. The United Nations is working with Member States and civil society partners to promote the adoption of a political commitment that recognizes the humanitarian impact of explosive weapons in populated areas and seeks to constrain their use. In November 2013, the Secretary-General addressed a note verbale to all Member States requesting that they provide relevant information to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs pertaining to their practices and policies regarding the protection of civilians. Member States are encouraged to provide such information.

D. Internal displacement

59. Of particular concern is the number of conflict-induced internally displaced persons, which reached a record level at the end of 2013, with 33 million persons internally displaced, the majority of whom were women and children. The average length of conflict-induced internal displacement is 17 years, during which time many internally displaced persons have limited access to basic services, struggle to find livelihoods and are at increased risk of discrimination and exploitation, while displaced children have limited access to education. Displacement increases risks and vulnerabilities, such as gender-based violence, particularly for women and girls. The risk of disaster-induced displacement is estimated to have doubled in the past

⁷ Figures provided by Action on Armed Violence, based on a preliminary assessment of a consolidated data set of incidents of explosive violence recorded during 2014.

40 years and is expected to further increase as demographic and socioeconomic pressures and environmental change continue to create conditions of vulnerability.

60. Despite some progress to improve the coordination and effectiveness of the humanitarian response in support of internally displaced persons, important gaps remain. The Brookings Institution study entitled "Ten years after humanitarian reform: how have internally displaced persons fared?", released in 2014 with the support of UNHCR, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and Switzerland, highlighted the challenges and achievements to date, including the importance of strong, sustained political leadership, with investment at senior levels, and the effective involvement of development actors to address the needs of internally displaced persons. For example, Côte d'Ivoire, Kyrgyzstan and Mali have developed strategies for internally displaced persons and returning refugees. Those are good examples of cooperation between development and humanitarian actors which should be repeated where feasible.

61. The sustainable development goals will offer a once-in-a-generation opportunity to effectively address protracted displacement. To that end, the plight of millions of internally displaced persons and refugees around the world should be reflected in the framework, as well as their right to live in safety and dignity, with access to essential services, education and legal documentation, and to return safely to their homes or integrate into new communities.

E. Gender-based violence

62. Gender-based violence remains a core protection concern in situations of conflict, disaster and displacement. In 2014, sexual violence, including rape, slavery and forced marriage, against adolescent girls continued to be a disturbing pattern. Other concerns include the use of sexual violence as a form of persecution to forcibly displace populations. Sexual violence in the context of rising violent extremism was also reported.

63. The newly revised Inter-Agency Standing Committee Guidelines for Integrating Gender-based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Action specifically detail minimum interventions for prevention and response to sexual violence. Critical, field-driven programmes, such as the information management system on gender-based violence, are essential for ensuring a robust response to meet overwhelming need. Also essential are political will and collective and decisive recognition at the highest levels that addressing gender-based violence in a humanitarian crisis is central to an effective humanitarian response and to promoting resilience and recovery. Increased support and funding for programming to address gender-based violence are urgently required.

F. Adverse humanitarian consequences of counter-terrorism measures

64. During the past decade, the Security Council and many Member States have adopted or expanded counter-terrorism measures. While efforts to fight terrorism are legitimate, they may at times have adverse humanitarian consequences. Continued dialogue between humanitarian organizations, the Governments concerned, donors and the counter-terrorism and sanctions committees of the Security Council is essential to limit the potential negative impact of some counter-terrorism measures.

Humanitarian actors, Member States and intergovernmental organizations should work together to ensure the inclusion of exemptions for humanitarian action in domestic and international legal regimes and policies relating to sanctions and counter-terrorism. It is equally crucial to ensure that the humanitarian perspective is included in the deliberations of leading entities on financial transactions, such as the Financial Action Task Force. In addition, there is a pressing need for the definition of acceptable parameters for counter-terrorism clauses in funding agreements. The dialogue on counter-terrorism measures should also touch on risk management and due diligence. Humanitarian actors should put in place, where possible and according to prevailing circumstances, the monitoring systems necessary to ensure that aid goes only to those who are in greatest need. As part of those efforts, humanitarian organizations and Member States should engage in a dialogue on risk mitigation, risk tolerance and risk sharing.

V. Progress in the coordination of humanitarian action

A. Humanitarian programme cycle

65. The humanitarian programme cycle is a coordinated series of actions undertaken to help prepare for, manage and deliver a more effective humanitarian response and better address the needs of affected people. In 2014, particular emphasis was placed on identifying lessons learnt and best practices to inform adjustments to guidance and tools. For example, the multicluster/sector initial rapid assessment framework has been updated, based on its application in the aftermath of typhoon Haiyan and other disasters over the past two years. The use of mobile data collection tools, such as KoBo, which proved useful in the response to the outbreak of the Ebola virus, is being expanded.

66. With regard to protection, one key objective is to strengthen the analysis of protection concerns and actions that can improve the protection of affected people in humanitarian response plans and across all sectors of the humanitarian response. Equal attention is being paid to mainstreaming protection into programme development and implementation by each sector. Under the auspices of the Global Protection Cluster, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee has launched an independent "whole system" review. The review, which will be completed in the first half of 2015, will offer recommendations on how the humanitarian system can improve the protection of people in need in humanitarian crises. Joint missions have been conducted, including to South Sudan, to help strengthen coordination at the field level through humanitarian country teams, inter-cluster/sector mechanisms and sector coordination.

67. In 2015, the humanitarian programme cycle will continue to be refined through embedding crisis risk analysis at the core of humanitarian strategic planning, including by linking regional and national versions of the Index for Risk Management to joint humanitarian and development programming. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the Development Operations Coordination Office will prepare and update joint guidance on aligning development and humanitarian planning cycles for delivering long-term resilience-enabling outcomes in protracted and cyclical crises. There will also be an increased focus on monitoring, with the monitoring component of the humanitarian programme cycle

being fully rolled out in 2015. That will improve accountability in delivery and ensure that necessary adjustments are made during the course of a response.

Understanding the different needs of affected people

68. Given the different needs, capacities, challenges and experiences of women, men, girls and boys, including adolescents and youth, persons with disabilities and older persons, the participation of all affected groups in decision-making and in the implementation of responses is essential to ensure that humanitarian programming is informed, appropriate and effective.

69. The communication needs of different segments of the population and the possible barriers to accessing information, should also be systematically assessed and taken into consideration in the planning of a response, so that humanitarian actors can provide information that will allow communities to access the help they need or prioritize their needs, contribute to the design of responses, make informed decisions and be effective leaders in their own recovery.

70. The practice of systematically collecting, analysing and using data disaggregated by sex and age to inform programming is critical, as is prioritizing gender and age analysis, especially in identifying the most vulnerable and reducing vulnerability to different forms of exploitation. A commitment to providing the necessary levels of financial and human resources required to deliver gender-responsive humanitarian action is critical.

71. In 2014, as part of the commitment of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee under the transformative agenda to improve accountability to affected people, the humanitarian community continued to take steps to establish frameworks and systems to engage different segments of the population in decision-making processes. That inclusive and participatory approach should be integral to all phases of the humanitarian programme cycle. However, challenges remain in understanding how best to equitably engage people affected by conflict, in particular the most at-risk groups, given the limitations imposed by the lack of humanitarian access and possible security implications.

72. In Inter-Agency Standing Committee operational peer reviews, the importance of establishing gender responsive frameworks on engaging and communicating with communities as a preparedness measure was noted, as were the difficulties of integrating that work in the midst of a level 3 emergency. One of the conclusions of the reviews was that all staff training and induction sessions should cover accountability to, and communications with, affected people, including measures to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse.

Gender equality and women's empowerment

73. Gender equality and women's empowerment in humanitarian action is central to efficient and effective preparedness and response. Existing gender inequalities deepen during emergencies and women and girls are likely to be disproportionately affected, as they are more exposed to gendered risks and vulnerabilities. For example, human trafficking can flourish in emergencies, exploiting the vulnerabilities of women and children. Recognizing and addressing the different and specific priorities of women, girls, boys and men of different ages, disabilities and disparities should be the fundamental basis that informs humanitarian action.

74. There is a need for better ways to hold all accountable to the commitments made in global, regional and national normative frameworks to ensure gender equality and women's empowerment in preparedness and humanitarian response. In 2014, the operational peer reviews of level 3 emergencies all highlighted the gaps in the translation into practical action of policies that ensured increased protection of vulnerable populations. Tools such as the Inter-Agency Standing Committee gender marker, which have been in use since 2009, should be adapted and utilized, and linked to the humanitarian programme cycle and monitoring systems, to enable results to be tracked. That will not only contribute to effectiveness, but also improve accountability and prioritization of the most vulnerable groups.

Sexual and reproductive health

75. Sixty per cent of preventable maternal deaths and 53 per cent of deaths of children aged under five take place in settings of conflict, displacement and natural disasters. Without access to emergency obstetric services, many women die while pregnant or when giving birth and many more suffer long-term health consequences that are preventable. Many newborns do not survive even their first 24 hours of life. Under those circumstances and without access to sexual and reproductive health, maternal and infant mortality rates will rise. Reliable and secure access to lifesaving reproductive health services and commodities is essential, such as those necessary to protect women and adolescent girls from preventable death during complicated obstructed deliveries or from unintended pregnancies. It is essential that proper care, including emergency contraception, protection from sexually transmitted infections and HIV prophylaxis, be provided to all victims of sexual violence, including men and boys, ideally within 72 hours of the violence occurring. Programmes that engage boys and men in support of better sexual and reproductive health outcomes also have an important role to play. Meeting sexual and reproductive health needs is critical for the resilience and more rapid recovery of affected communities overall.

B. Information management

76. The coordination of emergency responses depends on the management and sharing of information for better analysis and decision-making. Reliable information and data is essential to inform all aspects of a response, including preparedness, planning and coordination, programme monitoring and financial tracking. Effectiveness in response to a crisis hinges on information management and in particular, on whether the latest advances in technology can be harnessed to provide information services to operational partners and evolving constituencies.

77. During the reporting period, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs began a multi-year workstream to develop new digital platforms and systems and modernize existing ones, to improve information services to the humanitarian community and support its humanitarian coordination work. Major areas of work include developing a contact management system for humanitarians in the field and upgrading its financial tracking service. Further, many United Nations humanitarian agencies and clusters have increased the quality and scope of their information management tools, such as the UNHCR data portal, a primary source of information for partners and donors working for the Syrian Arab Republic refugee response.

78. With advances in technology, the availability and volume of information in crisis situations has grown exponentially. For that information to be useful, it must be collected from a wide array of sources and transformed from raw data into information that decision makers can use quickly to help save lives. The humanitarian data exchange project, launched in 2014, will serve as a central location for humanitarian data from many organizations and countries in order to create efficiency and enhance decision making and public outreach. The platform was piloted in Colombia and Kenya in 2014 and was used in the Ebola response to present data on health-care facilities in a coherent manner.

C. Effective partnerships and complementarity

79. The humanitarian system aims to bring in more diverse political, technical and financial support for humanitarian action through proactive advocacy and strengthening relationships with all potential partners. In 2014, the multilateral system for humanitarian operations in Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic and various humanitarian pooled funds saw a growth in the engagement of new and returning donors. In 2014 also, initiatives were undertaken to converge the common interests of all stakeholders for humanitarian operations in Chad, Iraq, Philippines, Somalia, South Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen, through pledging conferences, joint partnership missions, strategic dialogue and regional information platforms with diverse stakeholder participation.

80. The United Nations has continued to engage strongly with a number of regional organizations to strengthen humanitarian coordination, emergency preparedness and response actions. The adoption and ratification by member States of the African Union of the Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala Convention) shows the positive contributions that can be made by regional mechanisms in building normative frameworks which facilitate the protection of, and assistance to, the most vulnerable.

81. The United Nations also continues to connect with and strengthen complementarity among other actors involved in response efforts. For example, the recommendations set out in the 2014 report of the Overseas Development Institute, *Humanitarian Crises, Emergency Preparedness and Response: the Role of Business and the Private Sector*, were implemented, underlining the importance of strategic private sector engagement beyond the provision of material support. The deployment of private sector focal points for the responses to typhoon Haiyan and the Ebola outbreak facilitated consultations and meaningful support from the private sector.

82. National and local governments, national disaster management authorities, local civil society and faith-based organizations, donors, diaspora communities and regional actors, including foreign military forces, are just some of the other partners in humanitarian response, each providing their comparative advantage and adding concrete value. To make multipolar responses more effective, there need to be good interaction and better complementarity among actors around needs and expected outcomes, the predictability of capacities and resources and within an agreed response framework, in order to optimize and maximize collective responses to growing needs. While the traditional international humanitarian system will

continue to have a critical role in many major responses, there is a growing recognition of the need to connect the many actors and systems involved in humanitarian response more systematically and predictably.

D. Humanitarian action in urban areas

83. The concentration of people, resources and services in cities can increase the impacts of disasters, conflict and violence. Internally displaced persons, refugees and migrants are increasingly drawn to urban areas, seeking better services and livelihood opportunities, which can overstretch the absorption capacity of those cities, including essential services such as health, education, water and sanitation. Humanitarian action in urban areas requires the development of area-based approaches, in particular strong partnerships between municipal authorities, civil society organizations and humanitarian agencies. The specific risks and challenges of adapting humanitarian responses in urban areas should be considered when developing new tools and models. The multi-stakeholder engagement and multi-hazard disaster response plan for Government and civil society partners in Kenya or the deployment to the Syrian Arab Republic of senior urban advisors to guide the humanitarian response are good examples on which Member States and humanitarian organizations should build.

84. The new urban agenda, which is expected to emerge from the third United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III) to be held in Quito in October 2016, presents a good opportunity to build urban resilience effectively, with a disaster risk reduction perspective, through better alignment of humanitarian and development programming and funding, and partnerships with local governments and the private sector.

E. “White Helmets”

85. The “White Helmets” initiative was endorsed by the General Assembly in resolution 49/139 B in 1994. Since then, the Assembly has regularly renewed its support for the initiative in resolutions 54/98, 56/102, 58/118, 61/220, 67/84 69/134. Volunteers or “White Helmets” act at the request of the affected country or within the framework of a call for international humanitarian assistance and support immediate response to disasters, as well as rehabilitation, reconstruction and development. They also promote risk prevention and management. Since the adoption of the initiative, they have participated in more than 262 international humanitarian assistance missions, many of them in coordination with the United Nations. With 20 years of experience in supporting and facilitating humanitarian assistance around the world, the initiative has become a useful tool in humanitarian action.

F. Strengthening human resource capacity

86. Effective humanitarian action requires the timely deployment of staff and assets. The United Nations continues to prioritize and strengthen the timely recruitment and deployment of skilled and experienced humanitarian staff, while remaining committed to the need for diversity in geographical representation and

gender balance. The Office of Human Resources Management is working with a number of other departments on diversity outreach activities and events in numerous countries. In addition, more diverse social media outlets, such as LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, Sina Weibo and Chinese LinkedIn, will be used to post vacancies to attract a greater diversity of candidates.

VI. World Humanitarian Summit

87. The World Humanitarian Summit will convene in Istanbul on 26 and 27 May 2016. The Summit is a historic opportunity to commit to an agenda for change, aimed at saving more lives, alleviating suffering and upholding human dignity in the face of conflicts and disasters.

88. Reflecting the multi-stakeholder nature of the Summit process, a total of eight regional consultations have been organized, each directed by a regional steering group comprised of key actors from the respective regions. Each regional consultation is preceded by months of extensive inputs from stakeholders, including people affected by conflicts and disasters and civil society groups, and discussions have been held online. The regional consultation events themselves have been dynamic forums, bringing together a diverse set of actors involved in humanitarian action, including Member States.

89. Four thematic teams, each composed of a geographically diverse set of experts, have been formed to synthesize and analyse outputs from the various consultations on the four broad themes of the Summit:

- Humanitarian effectiveness
- Reducing vulnerability and managing risk
- Transformation through innovation
- Serving the needs of people in conflict.

Many humanitarian organizations and other stakeholders are currently finalizing their inputs ahead of the deadline set for 31 July 2015. A number of key issues are emerging from the consultations to date: for example, placing a greater value on humanitarian action that puts the needs of affected people at the core of the response and giving them, particularly women, a stronger voice and choice through more demand-driven humanitarian action; reinforcing humanitarian action in conflict by confronting violations of international humanitarian law and finding innovative ways to ensure affected people have access to assistance and protection; maximizing the use of available local resources and networks in humanitarian action, both in terms of preparedness, response and resilience, particularly in protracted and recurrent crises; and securing more sustained and flexible humanitarian financing.

90. In addition to the remaining regional consultations, there are several remaining key milestones in the process: the humanitarian affairs segment of the Economic and Social Council, to be held in Geneva in June 2015, thematic consultations in September and the global consultation to be held in October 2015. Following those consultations, the Secretary-General will present his proposals in a summary report that sets out the priority areas for action and recommendations on how they should be taken forward.

VII. Recommendations

91. On the basis of the above, the Secretary-General recommends the following:

(a) Member States, non-State actors and humanitarian organizations should continue to promote greater respect for and adherence to the humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence;

(b) Member States and, where applicable, non-State actors should adhere to their obligation to respect and protect humanitarian and health-care personnel, their transport and facilities;

(c) Member States and non-State actors should improve compliance with international humanitarian law and promote accountability for violations, and Member States, the United Nations and humanitarian organizations should condemn instances of such violations more consistently and systematically;

(d) Member States should ensure accountability for violations of international humanitarian law and human rights perpetrated by all parties in situations of armed conflict, including attacks against humanitarian and health-care personnel and facilities, and the wilful deprivation of items necessary for survival, by pursuing all domestic and international options;

(e) Member States, United Nations entities and civil society organizations should recognize the indiscriminate character of explosive weapons and their significant impact on civilians in populated areas, strengthen the political commitment to address the problem and develop practical measures based on existing good practice;

(f) Member States, United Nations actors and humanitarian organizations should continue to work together to ensure that people are protected from harm and their rights upheld before and during a crisis, including by understanding the different protection needs of different people, and ensuring that those needs are adequately integrated into preparedness, response and recovery efforts;

(g) Member States, the United Nations and humanitarian organizations should strengthen their efforts to ensure better protection and assistance of internally displaced persons and, in particular, address the long-term nature of displacement by adopting and implementing long-term strategies, based on national and regional frameworks in line with the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement and capacitated national institutions. In that respect, Member States should support the ratification and implementation of the Kampala Convention and give close consideration to the Guiding Principles;

(h) Member States, the United Nations and humanitarian and development organizations should recognize the central role of national and local authorities and institutions in addressing the specific needs of internally displaced persons and refugees, and in finding solutions for displacement, and the role of the Emergency Relief Coordinator in ensuring improved coordination with those institutions and among humanitarian organizations;

(i) Member States should make further efforts to simplify and expedite procedures for the deployment of humanitarian personnel and goods;

(j) Member States, the United Nations and humanitarian organizations should provide the necessary human and financial resources to deliver programmes responsive to the different needs of affected people, including through the systematic collection, analysis and use of data disaggregated by age and sex;

(k) The United Nations and humanitarian and development organizations should actively engage people affected by crises, in particular those most at risk, including through communication, participation in relevant processes and supporting their own efforts and capacities to meet their different needs and address their vulnerabilities;

(l) Member States should strengthen their commitments to prevent, mitigate and prepare for humanitarian crises by, inter alia, integrating risk management into national development plans, supporting multi-year humanitarian planning and ensuring connectivity of those plans with longer-term development priorities;

(m) The United Nations and humanitarian organizations should further strengthen their efforts in supporting national Governments to map emergency preparedness and response capacities at country and regional levels, including those of Governments, civil society, the private sector and other relevant actors, in order to better facilitate the connectivity and complementarity of disaster response efforts between national and international capacities;

(n) Member States, the United Nations and humanitarian organizations should invest in developing and strengthening local and national humanitarian response capacities in order to complement, rather than substitute or displace, national capacities to respond to crises, especially where those crises are prolonged or recurrent.

**General Assembly**

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Item 80 (a) of the preliminary list*

Oceans and the law of the sea

**Report on the work of the United Nations Open-ended
Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the
Law of the Sea at its sixteenth meeting**

**Letter dated 14 April 2015 from the Co-Chairs of the Consultative
Process addressed to the President of the General Assembly**

Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 69/245, we were appointed as the Co-Chairs of the sixteenth meeting of the United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea.

We have the honour to submit to you the attached report on the work of the Informal Consultative Process at its sixteenth meeting, which was held at United Nations Headquarters from 6 to 10 April 2015. The outcome of the meeting consists of our summary of issues and ideas raised during the meeting and, in particular, with regard to the topic of focus: "Oceans and sustainable development: integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development, namely, environmental, social and economic".

In line with past practice, we kindly request that the present letter and the report be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under item 80 (a) of the preliminary list.

(Signed) Gustavo Meza-Cuadra
Don MacKay
Co-Chairs

* A/70/50.

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Sixteenth meeting of the United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea

(6-10 April 2015)

Co-Chairs' summary of discussions¹

1. The United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea (the Informal Consultative Process) held its sixteenth meeting from 6 to 10 April 2015 and, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 69/245, focused its discussions on the topic entitled "Oceans and sustainable development: integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development, namely, environmental, social and economic".
2. The meeting was attended by representatives of 68 States, nine intergovernmental organizations and other bodies and entities, and seven non-governmental organizations.²
3. The following supporting documentation was available to the meeting: (a) advance, unedited reporting material on the topic of focus of the sixteenth meeting; and (b) format and annotated provisional agenda of the meeting (A/AC.259/L.16).

Agenda items 1 and 2

Opening of the meeting and adoption of the agenda

4. The Co-Chairs, Gustavo Meza-Cuadra (Peru) and Don MacKay (New Zealand), appointed by the President of the General Assembly, opened the meeting.
5. Opening remarks were made by the Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs and the Assistant Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Inter-Agency Affairs, on behalf of the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs.
6. The participants adopted the format and annotated provisional agenda and approved the proposed organization of work.

Agenda item 3

General exchange of views

7. A general exchange of views was held at the plenary meetings on 6 and 9 April on the topic of focus, "Oceans and sustainable development: integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development, namely, environmental, social and economic", as reflected below (paras. 8-34). An information session was held on 7 April (paras. 35-42). The discussions held on the topic of focus within the panel segments are reflected in paragraphs 43 to 115 below.
8. Representatives highlighted the critical importance of recognizing the interlinkages between and integrating the three dimensions of sustainable development in order to ensure sustained and inclusive economic growth, social

¹ The summary is intended for reference purposes only and not as a record of the discussions.

² A list of participants is available on the website of the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea at www.un.org/Depts/los/index.htm.

development and environmental protection. They stressed the essential role of oceans in sustainable development, including for poverty eradication, food security and the creation of sustainable livelihoods. They highlighted the contribution of oceans to various industries, such as fishing, aquaculture, shipping and shipbuilding, oil and gas exploitation, mining, the laying of submarine cables and tourism, as well as the ecosystem services provided by oceans, for example in the production of oxygen, the regulation of the climate system and the provision of genetic resources for use in various sectors.

9. In that regard, it was noted that oceans and their resources were essential to all States, whether coastal or landlocked. Representatives of small island developing States emphasized the particular importance of oceans for the survival and livelihoods of their people, economies and cultures.

10. Representatives stressed the importance of conserving and sustainably using oceans and seas and their resources and of protecting marine biodiversity and the marine environment for the achievement of sustainable development. Some representatives noted, in that regard, the need to balance economic activities and the protection of the marine environment.

11. Representatives highlighted the importance of international law, as reflected in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, recalling that it provided the legal framework for all activities in the oceans and seas and its implementation was essential for achieving sustainable development, given that it had the integration of the economic, social and environmental dimensions at the core of its provisions. Several representatives also recalled the commitments made in other international documents, including the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, from 20 to 22 June 2012, entitled "The future we want", and the outcome document of the third International Conference on Small Island Developing States, held in Apia from 1 to 4 September 2014, entitled "SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway".

12. Representatives welcomed the timeliness of the topic of focus in the light of the continuing intergovernmental negotiations on the post-2015 development agenda and expressed appreciation for the advance, unedited reporting material thereon, which had been made available to them for that meeting (subsequently issued as document A/70/74). Many representatives expressed the view that the meeting could contribute to, and allow for greater understanding of, the post-2015 development agenda process and several suggested that the present summary could be brought to the attention of the co-facilitators of the intergovernmental negotiations on the post-2015 development agenda. With regard to the discussions on oceans in the context of the post-2015 development agenda, several representatives emphasized that the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea was the legal framework within which all activities in the oceans and seas must be carried out.

13. Many representatives recalled their support for a stand-alone sustainable development goal on oceans, as reflected in goal 14 of the report of the Open Working Group of the General Assembly on Sustainable Development Goals, to "conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development" (A/68/970 and Corr.1). Several representatives, however, expressed concern that the status of the legal framework set out in the Convention had not been properly reflected therein (see also para. 39 below).

14. Several representatives drew attention to the critical importance of addressing means of implementation, in particular transfer of technology and capacity development. The importance of science-based and measurable goals and targets was highlighted. The view was expressed that levels of development should be taken into account when establishing goals and targets and that the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities should be adhered to.

15. Some representatives expressed the view that further work on the indicators relating to sustainable development goal 14 was required. The need for Member States to provide input into the development of global indicators was also highlighted by several representatives. Some representatives emphasized that the technical work of the Statistical Commission should be conducted under the supervision of the political negotiating process, in order to avoid the risk of inconsistencies in the overall process. The importance of ensuring a scientific approach to the development of the indicators and creating a mechanism for experts in marine science to provide input was underscored. Some representatives recognized the need for specialist advice and noted that those organizations with competence in oceans should be called upon to provide it. In that regard, the role of the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea of the Office of Legal Affairs of the Secretariat, the expertise of which went beyond the law of the sea and covered issues relating to oceans in general, was highlighted, and some representatives called for the Division to be fully integrated into the process. Those representatives requested that the concerns raised about the process for developing well-functioning indicators for sustainable development goal 14 should be conveyed to the co-facilitators of the intergovernmental negotiations on the post-2015 development agenda.

16. Some representatives expressed support for the proposal of a representative to establish an open international process to review the effective implementation of sustainable development goal 14 every three years (see para. 41 below). It was suggested that the Informal Consultative Process could contribute to that review in 2017 or 2018. In that context, it was noted that the sustainable development of oceans, including the implementation of goal 14, should be informed by robust science and knowledge, in order to monitor progress and better understand the role of healthy marine ecosystems.

17. A number of representatives provided information on their efforts to integrate the three dimensions of sustainable development in relation to oceans, including an overview of policies, legislation, activities and initiatives at the national, regional and global levels. In that context, they indicated what they considered to be the main challenges to effective integration, as well as lessons learned and opportunities to advance the integration of the three dimensions.

18. In particular, many representatives expressed concern regarding the current pressure on oceans and their resources, in particular overfishing, fisheries subsidies and overcapacity, destructive fishing practices, illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing, pollution, coastal run-off, climate change and ocean acidification, and highlighted corresponding challenges hindering sustainable development. Those pressures and impacts jeopardized the ability of the oceans to provide important ecosystem services, with implications for food security and livelihoods and challenges to local and global economies.

19. Several representatives considered those pressures to be a particular barrier to economic growth and sustainable development for small island developing States,

given their reliance on oceans and their resources. The disproportionate impacts of climate change on developing countries, in particular coastal States and small island developing States, was also emphasized. In that regard, the importance of restoring the productivity of oceans, including by rebuilding fish stocks and reducing multiple pressures on critical marine ecosystems, such as coral reefs, with a view to improving their resilience to withstand the impacts of climate change were considered essential. Those representatives also cited inequitable distribution of revenue from fisheries as a barrier to the sustainable development of their States.

20. Representatives emphasized the implementation of the existing legal framework at the global and regional levels as an important challenge to be addressed in order to achieve sustainable development.

21. Several representatives called for the governance of ocean activities to integrate the three dimensions of sustainable development. Attention was drawn to the benefits of integrated maritime policies and of promoting "blue growth" or a "blue economy" for sustained economic development. In that context, the Pacific Islands regional ocean policy, the 2050 Africa's Integrated Maritime Strategy, the European Union Integrated Maritime Policy and the Eastern Caribbean Regional Ocean Policy were referred to, as was the Antananarivo communiqué of 5 March 2015 of the nineteenth meeting of the Economic Commission for Africa Intergovernmental Committee of Experts. Continuing international cooperation in the General Assembly towards a legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction was highlighted by some representatives as a necessary step for an integrated approach.

22. It was also observed that adopting an integrated approach to the management of ocean activities would serve as an effective mechanism for the implementation of the sustainable development goals. In that regard, the need to promote the effective integration of the goals into national action plans was underlined.

23. Some representatives also pointed out that an integrated approach to the management of ocean activities would limit the cumulative effects of human activities within a defined ocean space and help to maintain the health of marine ecosystems. In that regard, a number of representatives stressed the benefits of marine spatial planning and precautionary and ecosystem-based approaches for the conservation, sustainable use and management of marine resources. Tools such as environmental impact assessments and marine protected areas were also highlighted by many representatives as a means of implementing an integrated approach. The need for sector-specific measures, such as measures to reduce pollution, address fisheries subsidies, destructive fishing practices and illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing, and promote small-scale and artisanal fisheries was also emphasized by several representatives. Many representatives further highlighted the need to tackle climate change, including through adaptation and mitigation measures, and also to adopt an integrated approach to disaster risk reduction and management, with a view to enhancing the resilience of ecosystems and communities. It was noted that, at the Third United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, held in Sendai, Japan, from 14 to 18 March 2015, the participants had underlined the need for action plans on disaster reduction in countries affected by extreme weather events, in particular small island developing States.

24. In addition, some representatives pointed out that the value of marine ecosystem services needed to be visible and included in national accounting, business development and community planning.

25. The importance of maritime boundary delimitation was also underscored by several representatives in the context of resource exploitation for economic benefits, sustainable management of living and non-living resources and in increasing effective maritime surveillance and security.

26. Representatives further stressed the importance of enhancing cooperation and coordination at all levels and across sectors for an integrated approach to the management of ocean activities. Several representatives highlighted the need to make use of existing organizations and mechanisms, including at the regional level, to ensure coordination across and between the range of ocean stakeholders. The coordination taking place through UN-Oceans, the inter-agency coordination mechanism on oceans and coastal issues within the United Nations system, was noted.

27. The view was expressed that decision-making with regard to management measures on a regional basis was a sound approach, given that capacities, levels of knowledge and priorities varied by region. It was also observed that regional cooperation, such as the Coral Triangle Initiative on coral reefs, fisheries and food security, was an important mechanism for holistic and coordinated management of ocean resources. Some representatives stressed the need for cooperation on issues of common interest between regional organizations with different mandates, including regional fisheries management organizations and regional seas programmes, because they considered such cooperation vital to the integrated management of ocean activities.

28. Several representatives expressed the view that lack of capacity was one of the principal obstacles to advancing sustainable development. In particular, there was a call for increased marine scientific research and scientific capacity to improve knowledge in support of decision-making and sustainable management. There was also a need to enhance the sharing of scientific knowledge and experience as well as technology transfer. Strengthening the science-policy interface was also considered necessary.

29. The need for human resources and institutional development was also highlighted as a necessary prerequisite to deriving benefits from the oceans and achieving sustainability.

30. Several representatives drew attention to the need to build the capacity to exercise the rights and comply with the obligations set out in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. The need for technical assistance with regard to the establishment of the outer limits of the continental shelf beyond 200 nautical miles as a basis for economic and social development was highlighted.

31. The importance of enhancing the capacity of developing States to monitor and control activities in their waters, including fisheries, was stressed, as was the importance of protecting small-scale fisheries.

32. Several representatives called for specific support for small island developing States in adopting measures adapted to their unique vulnerabilities, including support for sustainable fisheries by improving the regime for monitoring, control and surveillance of fishing vessels to effectively prevent, deter and eliminate illegal,

unregulated and unreported fishing. Increasing international assistance in monitoring, predicting and identifying coral bleaching and improving strategies to manage reefs to support their natural resilience was also considered critical by several representatives.

33. One representative also drew attention to the particular vulnerabilities faced by landlocked States, including in the context of climate change. It was noted that, in the light of those vulnerabilities and given the interdependence of States, effective cooperation agreements with States that had access to the sea was essential in order to facilitate transit for the import and export of goods and access to resources by landlocked countries.

34. The importance of partnerships as a means of building capacity was highlighted by several representatives. In that regard, several other representatives called for sustainable and durable partnerships to enhance their ability to harvest the resources in their exclusive economic zones.

Information session

35. The Permanent Representative of Ireland to the United Nations and co-facilitator of the intergovernmental negotiations on the post-2015 development agenda, David Donoghue, provided a briefing on progress in that process. He noted the growing importance of oceans in the discussions leading to the post-2015 development agenda, including the support for the inclusion of oceans as a theme of the interactive dialogues of the United Nations summit for the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda, to be held from 25 to 27 September 2015. He described the process relating to the post-2015 development agenda, including the intergovernmental negotiations, as well as related, interlinked processes, such as the third International Conference on Financing for Development, to be held in Addis Ababa from 13 to 16 July 2015.

36. He reported that indicators to measure the achievement of the goals and targets of the post-2015 development agenda were being developed in the context of the Statistical Commission and a first draft had been discussed during the most recent session of the intergovernmental negotiations, in March 2015. It was envisaged that a set of indicators would be finalized by March 2016. The technical work on the indicators would be carried out by the Commission, aided by major stakeholders, including national statistical offices, civil society and academic inputs.

37. He concluded by stressing that further work was needed on the arrangements for follow-up and review of the agenda, proposed themes for the interactive dialogues to be held during the summit and the draft declaration.

38. In the ensuing discussion, it was noted that the current meeting would facilitate discussions on oceans in the context of the process for the post-2015 development agenda. Several representatives expressed support for the inclusion of oceans as a theme of the interactive dialogues at the summit.

39. Representatives stated that the outcome of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals should form the basis of the post-2015 development agenda, with several emphasizing the importance of a stand-alone goal on oceans in that agenda, as reflected in sustainable development goal 14. Several representatives noted, however, that the targets for that goal, in particular 14.c, should be consistent with international law, as reflected in the United Nations Convention on the Law of

the Sea, and aligned with the language agreed upon in previous General Assembly resolutions and the outcome documents of sustainable development summits and conferences. Several representatives also noted that some of the targets lacked elements already reflected in the outcome of previous summits and conferences, including "The future we want". In that context, representatives reaffirmed that the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea set out the legal framework within which all activities in the oceans and seas must be carried out and that it provided the basis for the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and their resources. One representative also expressed concern at the wording of target 14.6. It was also noted by another representative that the proposed provisional indicators for goal 14 did not address the important target on illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing.

40. With regard to indicators, views were expressed that they should be policy-relevant, ambitious, transparent and of high quality; they should measure actions and the impact of those actions towards accomplishing the goals and be consistent with existing international standards. One representative expressed concern that not all States would be able to track progress on the basis of all the indicators discussed to date.

41. One representative highlighted the importance of ensuring the effective implementation of sustainable development goal 14 and of devising a process to that end, making reference to continuing consultations on a proposal for triennial meetings specifically to monitor the implementation of, and progress towards achieving, goal 14.

Area of focus: oceans and sustainable development: integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development, namely, environmental, social and economic

42. In accordance with the format and annotated provisional agenda, the discussion panel on the topic of focus was organized in two segments structured around: (a) the environmental, social and economic dimensions of oceans and the progress made in integrating the three dimensions, including an overview of activities and initiatives promoting their integration; and (b) opportunities for, and challenges to, the enhanced integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development in relation to oceans. The segments were launched by presentations from panellists, followed by interactive discussions (see www.un.org/Depts/los/consultative_process/consultative_process.htm).

1. Environmental, social and economic dimensions of oceans and progress made in integrating the three dimensions, including an overview of activities and initiatives promoting their integration

(a) Panel presentations

43. In segment 1, the Assistant Secretary-General and head of the New York office of the United Nations Environment Programme, Elliot Harris, described how the utilization of an ecosystem approach to protecting the marine environment could further the integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development. He highlighted the strategic directions formulated in regional seas conventions and action plans to effectively apply an ecosystem approach in the management of marine and coastal environments and the development of indicators to measure

progress and success to that end. Referring to indicators under development in the context of the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities, he noted that such indicators could contribute to monitoring progress towards the achievement of the relevant targets under sustainable development goal 14.

44. The Head of the Transport and Maritime Sectors Unit of the Sectoral Policies Department at the International Labour Organization (ILO), Brandt Wagner, provided an ILO perspective on the integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development. He highlighted the way in which ILO conventions, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and other instruments addressed the conditions of work of seafarers and fishers, which constituted an important element of the social dimension of oceans. In that regard, he noted the lack of participation in some legal instruments addressing the social dimension as a challenge to overcome. Reference was made to the work of ILO in addressing forced labour for migrant fishers. He observed that the maritime work of ILO intersected with various organizations and partners and stressed the importance of inter-agency cooperation and coordination at all levels, including through UN-Oceans.

45. The founding President and Chief Executive Officer of the World Ocean Council, Paul Holthus, addressed the economic dimension of sustainable development, drawing attention to the important contribution of the oceans to the global economy and highlighting the wide range of ocean activities undertaken and services provided by the ocean business community, which generated trillions of dollars in revenue. He noted how the increasing number of uses of the oceans and regulations, in addition to the growing trend towards an integrated management of ocean activities, provided a gradually more complex and challenging business environment for ocean industries. In that regard, he underscored the importance of industry involvement in ocean policy discussions.

46. The Ambassador for Oceans, Seas and Fresh Water of Sweden, Lisa Svensson, highlighted the link between healthy oceans, a healthy planet and healthy people. She stated that it was important to consider the increasing pressures facing the oceans, including as a result of population growth and climate change, and the importance of implementing an integrated approach to the management of maritime spaces and of developing a blue economy. In that regard, she referred to the Baltic Sea as an example of good practices in knowledge-sharing, with lessons learned in the implementation of marine spatial planning. She underscored the importance of data, broad stakeholder involvement and partnerships, as well as the opportunities and challenges relating to the mapping and valuation of ecosystem services.

47. The Executive Secretary of the International Collective in Support of Fishworkers, Sebastian Mathew, highlighted the important role played by small-scale fisheries for the sustainable development of coastal communities. He proposed a human rights-based approach in small-scale fisheries that could empower small-scale fishing communities to participate in decision-making processes, benefit vulnerable and marginalized groups in developing countries, address discrimination against women, as well as forced labour and child labour in fisheries, and protect the rights of migrant fishers and fish workers. Such an approach could further enhance social benefits and bring greater visibility to the contribution of small-scale fisheries and fishing communities to local and global food security and social development, as well as poverty eradication.

48. The representative of the International Chamber of Shipping, Simon Bennett, discussed the contribution of shipping to the three dimensions of sustainable development. With regard to environmental sustainability, he highlighted the projected investment that shipowners and operators would have to make in the near future in order to meet their obligations with regard to reductions in carbon dioxide and sulphur emissions, as well as ballast water management systems. Noting that shipping was a driver for green growth, he called for the adoption of a cost-benefit analysis before developing future regulations that might have an impact on the shipping industry. With regard to social sustainability, he highlighted the contribution of shipping to employment and noted that shipping was the only industrial sector with a comprehensive international framework in place addressing decent employment standards, following the entry into force of the ILO Maritime Labour Convention (2006).

49. The Director of the Environment Laboratories, International Atomic Energy Agency, David Osborn, addressed the integration of the environmental, social and economic dimensions as they related to ocean acidification. He emphasized that changes in ocean acidity were occurring about 100 times faster than at any time in the previous 20 million years, with consequent deleterious environmental, social and economic effects. He explained how innovative governance tools, legislative reforms, diversification of incomes, increased awareness and knowledge at all levels, including the promotion of scientific understanding, could help to limit the source of ocean acidification, reduce its impacts and protect coastal environments and communities. He noted that, while adaptation action could buy time, mitigation of carbon dioxide emissions was an integral part of the solution.

50. The international legal adviser to the International Cable Protection Committee, Douglas Burnett, highlighted the importance of fibre-optic submarine cables for global communication and economic development and in providing the underlying platform for scientific and technological cooperation. He noted that peer review studies had shown that the impacts of submarine cables on the marine environment ranged from neutral to benign. Noting that the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea provided an appropriate legal framework for the protection of cables, he encouraged the implementation of its provisions through national legislation, given that few States had enacted such legislation.

51. The Acting Director of the Coastal Zone Management Unit, Barbados, Lorna Inniss, highlighted the role of science for coastal tourism in small island developing States, noting the threat posed by the tourism industry to areas that were vulnerable to intense coastal hazards, including erosion. She explained how the integration of conservation, regulation and stabilization, based on sound science, could assist in the sustainable management of coasts and in reducing human-induced impacts on coastal resources. She also emphasized that assessments every five years under the regular process for global reporting and assessment of the state of the marine environment, including socioeconomic aspects (the Regular Process), could provide States with a valuable tool for evaluating the progress made in the sustainable development of the oceans and their resources.

(b) Panel discussions

52. Several representatives expressed concern regarding the effects of ocean acidification and the vulnerability of communities to its impacts.

53. In response to a question as to how ocean acidification could be included in the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held in Paris from 30 November to 11 December 2015, Mr. Osborn emphasized the need to include oceans in mitigation targets and adaptation measures. He also observed that the current emphasis on a 2°C warming target did not take into account the impact of ocean acidification, which would occur irrespective of warming. In response to a question regarding whether some areas were more at risk of ocean acidification, he explained that the areas most at risk would be those with limited capacity to adapt and respond because of their economic dependence on affected species or ecosystems. In addition, some marine areas and ecosystems were more vulnerable to ocean acidification because of the cumulative effects of other impacts. For example, coral reefs in some areas in the mid-Pacific had remained robust, the high levels of acidity notwithstanding, owing to the low level of pollution and absence of overfishing. One representative also cited national data that indicated that the good condition and resilience of corals in some areas under its jurisdiction resulted from the diversity of fish, which had reduced the growth of algae in bleached coral areas. Massive coral reef destruction within the region had therefore had an impact on areas within national jurisdiction. Mr. Osborn recommended reducing land-based run-off, fishing pressures and the introduction of invasive alien species, highlighting the need for increased global cooperation and international policy response in that regard.

54. He emphasized that, while ocean acidification presented real risks and challenges, there were also opportunities for growth. He noted that investing in science would increase understanding of the impacts of ocean acidification on a local scale and increase the capacity of a country to adapt. He stressed the need to understand impacts in an integrated manner, because an environmental impact, for example on food webs affecting whale populations, could then generate an economic impact, for example on whale-watching businesses.

55. Responding to a question on the impact of coastal hazards on fisheries, Ms. Inniss noted that nearshore small-scale fisheries were severely affected, a situation that was linked to the degradation of coral reefs caused by erosion and larger waves reaching the shore, causing small-scale fisheries to move further offshore. In that regard, to support the livelihoods of fishers, national consultations to incorporate fishers into development policies were under way, with a view to enhancing cooperation and avoiding potential conflict among stakeholders.

56. Highlighting the importance of protecting small-scale fisheries, some representatives stressed the need to tackle the issue of marginalization, where fishers, because of the development of tourism, were increasingly being pushed into more hazardous locations. In that regard, one representative noted the difficulties of demonstrating the value of small-scale fisheries, rendering it difficult to make a case for the allocation of resources to take on the issue. Mr. Mathew emphasized the necessity of recognizing that many small-scale fishers used low-impact gear, which helped to meet obligations under international instruments. He also stressed the need to recognize the cultural value of small-scale fisheries, for example for indigenous communities.

57. With regard to the role of States in addressing abusive practices and labour conditions at sea, Mr. Wagner noted that market forces, such as the purchasing policies of Governments and consumer preferences based on labour practices, could

have an impact. He also drew attention to the difficulty of gathering information on the conditions of fishers involved in illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing. ILO therefore often relied on its social partners to gather such information and supported broad inter-agency cooperation.

58. Answering a question on the position of the shipping industry regarding proposals to establish marine protected areas in the high seas, Mr. Bennett noted that the issue was new for the industry and that it was necessary to have its full involvement, including through the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and the International Chamber of Shipping, as well as taking into account existing rights under international instruments. The need to strike a balance between the freedom of the high seas and the protection of the marine environment, including through marine protected areas, was highlighted by one representative.

59. In response to a question raised as to how the increased costs of complying with environmental regulations would affect the volume of goods shipped worldwide, Mr. Bennett explained that such costs would ideally be borne by consumers, but that had not been the case because there were too many ships and too few cargoes. He further emphasized that some measures, while intended to reduce emissions, could increase them, for example by driving demand to other, less carbon-efficient modes of transportation.

60. Noting that communication and economies depended on the use and protection of submarine cables, a representative expressed concern that the laws and regulations necessary to protect them were lacking. Addressing the issue of the adequacy of the current legal framework, Mr. Burnett noted that one of the biggest problems was that many States had not complied with requirements under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea to implement national legislation, with the vast majority having either no national legislation or outdated legislation. He also drew attention to the need for a legal basis to prosecute terrorists who targeted submarine cables. He noted good cooperation between the cable and fishing industries, which had been effective at reducing the risk of entanglements.

61. Representatives discussed the role of Governments in promoting integration and how a planning framework could provide for dynamic management to take into account new uses of the oceans and changing conditions. Ms. Svensson and Mr. Holthus noted that creating dynamism required being forward-thinking and developing projections of use and non-use values, as well as different scenarios for the future. Mr. Holthus also noted the concern that the business community would have with a top-down, rigid legislative framework.

62. With regard to marine spatial planning, one representative noted that its implementation required a coherent, inclusive and transparent process, involving the private sector and scientists. Several representatives asked whether a legal framework was needed to implement marine spatial planning beyond the territorial sea. In that regard, Ms. Svensson observed that, in the case of the Baltic Sea, which was covered by European Union directive 2008/56/EC, dated 17 June 2008, establishing a framework for community action in the field of marine environmental policy and the Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission (Helsinki Commission), cooperation on marine spatial planning took place through a joint working group and was primarily based on a shared interest in the health of the Baltic Sea, rather than a legal framework.

63. Representatives stressed the importance of multisectoral and multi-stakeholder cooperation and sought input on how to develop coordination between industry, civil society and Governments. One representative noted that civil society and industry sometimes had differing perspectives on environmental issues. Mr. Holthus, however, observed that one point of common ground between Governments, civil society and industry was the need for sound science. It was important to ensure that the global business community was informed regarding policy initiatives in order to ensure buy-in. Ms. Svensson and Mr. Holthus also observed that, to secure the participation of the private sector, it was important to present the positive opportunities that could result from engagement and identify industry leaders with an interest in ocean issues. In response to a question regarding how to get the business community from small and medium-sized companies with the potential to have a major impact on oceans involved in ocean policy discussions, Mr. Holthus noted that the most important factor was for industries of any size to work together.

64. The need for scientific data on which to base policymaking, in particular in areas such as the Arctic and Antarctic, where climate change was altering usage patterns, was underlined. Advice was sought for small island developing States wishing to implement marine spatial planning, consider the valuation of ecosystem services and bring the private sector on board given the cost of sound science, which could bankrupt such States, and the difficulty in finding economists familiar with such tools as valuation of ecosystem services. Ms. Svensson expressed the view that part of the problem was limited communication within the scientific community. In addition, while there might be sufficient science available, it was also necessary to make it relevant to policymaking. She drew attention to the benefits of engaging local communities in mapping and valuing ecosystem services and presenting valuation as an investment rather than as a cost.

65. One representative asked whether programmes existed to strengthen cooperation among scientists, owing to the importance of sharing information and good practices in tackling ocean issues. It was noted that collaboration among scientists was continuing, including through the Regular Process. Furthermore, the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea and the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) were jointly developing a training programme on marine scientific research. The OceanTeacher Global Academy, a training programme implemented by the Commission to develop regional capacity in ocean science, observation, data collection, monitoring and the mitigation of coastal hazards, was also highlighted.

66. A question was raised about what a cross-cutting approach to the targets included under sustainable development goal 14 would entail. In that respect, Mr. Holthus said that the targets were sufficiently broad to be relevant to many sectors and be cross-cutting. The issue, he noted, was that, while some were specific in scope, others were more broadly drafted, making them more difficult for industry to make operational or implement. In that regard, it was considered important for all stakeholders to work together for effective implementation. In response, one representative noted that some targets might be deliberately ambiguous but that cooperation with multiple stakeholders, including industry, could be taken into account at the level of implementation.

67. Some representatives referred to the experience of the regional seas conventions and action plans in developing indicators. Mr. Harris explained that

technical experts within those conventions and action plans had made recommendations, but that the indicators had been agreed upon by States. He also explained that the process might have varied by region, depending on the levels of capacity and the methodologies employed. In response to questions regarding the possible use of regional indicators in the context of the sustainable development goals, he noted that each region had different characteristics and methodologies and a regional approach could thus be useful and also bring about economies of scale.

68. With regard to indicators to assess progress in relation to small-scale fisheries, Mr. Mathew suggested that information about traditional institutions and cooperatives for fishers and fish workers, the level of participatory processes in decision-making and cooperative arrangements and devolution of power to a community could be useful indicators.

2. Opportunities for, and challenges to, the enhanced integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development in relation to oceans

(a) Panel presentations

69. In segment 2, the Head of the Water and Ocean Governance Programme of the United Nations Development Programme Bureau of Development Policy, Andrew Hudson, highlighted the importance of restoring the oceans as an engine for sustainable economic development, job creation and poverty reduction by addressing such pressures as overfishing, invasive species, pollution (especially nutrients and plastics) and ocean acidification. He explained that reducing or removing the market and/or policy failures that caused those pressures could result in substantial environmental improvements, job growth and overall socioeconomic development.

70. The Director of the Centre for Resource Management and Environment Studies of University of the West Indies, Robin Mahon, focused on the implications of the regional-global governance nexus for sustainability through the example of the wider Caribbean region. He highlighted the problem of fragmentation in the governance of ocean activities as a major impediment to the integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development and described the benefits of establishing a framework for the governance of ocean activities as a single global architecture or network comprising global-regional subnetworks for various sectors and cross-cutting regional subnetworks. He noted that successful implementation would depend on effective linkages between global and regional subnetworks for various sectors and cross-cutting regional subnetworks.

71. The Chief Executive Officer of the Office of the Parties to the Nauru Agreement, Transform Aqorau, described the experience of the parties to the Nauru Agreement Concerning Cooperation in the Management of Fisheries of Common Interest in reshaping fisheries management in the Pacific. He emphasized the potential benefits for coastal States of taking greater ownership of the development of their fisheries. He noted that the development of alternative innovative arrangements for the allocation of fishing rights, such as replacing the licensing of fishing opportunities to foreign fishing companies with rights-based schemes, could empower developing countries, create strong market-based incentives and jobs and promote innovation and strategic partnerships. He noted, however, that many challenges to implementing such an innovative approach existed, including within existing regional fisheries management organizations. He highlighted the need for

policy coherence on the part of donor countries in support of sustainable fisheries in developing countries.

72. The representative of the China Institute for Marine Affairs, State Oceanic Administration of China, Wanfei Qiu, provided an overview of Chinese efforts to promote the integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development, including through its national ocean policy, laws and regulations. She also described the evolution in the use of tools and initiatives, such as marine protected areas, the restoration of coastal habitats, the promotion of blue economy initiatives nationally and internationally and alternative livelihood programmes for fishers. She highlighted challenges for the sustainable development of the oceans, including the need to better balance the economic dimension with the environmental and social dimensions, given that the promotion of economic growth, while it had helped alleviate poverty for millions of people, had also resulted in major environmental problems.

73. The Deputy Executive Secretary of the Global Ocean Commission, Rémi Parmentier, considered the issue of indicators in relation to the sustainable development of oceans and seas based on recent work carried out by the Commission. In particular, he highlighted the proposals of the Commission illustrating policy-relevant and action-oriented indicators for the targets associated with sustainable development goal 14. He expressed the view that the list of indicators for sustainable development goals proposed by the Statistical Commission was preliminary. He stated that further work was required, including with the input of the larger ocean community, to make the indicators stronger, more practical, policy-relevant and action-oriented. He also referred to a proposal by the Global Ocean Commission to create an independent ocean accountability board to benchmark progress on ocean conservation.

74. The Director of the Gerard J. Mangone Center for Marine Policy and President of the Global Ocean Forum, Biliana Cicin-Sain, spoke about enabling factors in achieving the sustainable development of oceans, based on a review of experiences with national and regional ocean policies. She underscored the importance of enabling factors, such as the legal framework, policies, marine science, infrastructure, including technology and technology transfer, capacity-building and resource mobilization, cooperation and coordination, and systems for measuring progress. She illustrated how 15 States and four regions had moved towards integrated governance of ocean activities and highlighted success factors, such as common principles, formal coordination of institutions, political support and binding policies, enabling stakeholders and ensuring adequate funding.

75. The leader for the marine action plan on small-scale fisheries and aquaculture within the Global Marine Programme of the World Wide Fund for Nature, Helena Motta, highlighted challenges to the management and governance of small-scale fisheries in developing countries, with a focus on Africa, including the need for equitable access, tenure rights and sustainable fisheries. Noting that small-scale fisheries were characterized by poor governance, lack of empowerment and habitat destruction, among other things, she highlighted activities undertaken in Mozambique to tackle those issues, including the monitoring of fisheries and diversification of species fished, data collection, participatory decision-making and co-management by fishers, and the challenges encountered, observing that the activities had had mixed results.

76. The Legal Adviser to the Secretary of State of the Sea of the Government of Portugal, Vasco Becker-Weinberg, provided an overview of the work and experience of Portugal in elaborating legislation on marine spatial planning and management of its areas within national jurisdiction, specifically with regard to integrating the environmental, social and economic dimensions of sustainable development. He described the process leading to the development of the law, the requirement for consultations with stakeholders, the integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development into decision-making by the authorities, inter-agency cooperation and coordination, the consideration of the legal status of different maritime zones and other salient features of the law.

77. The Under-Secretary of State at the Ministry of Environment, Land and Sea, Italy, in charge of protection of the seas, the blue economy and blue growth, Silvia Velo, addressed the issue of marine protected areas and sustainable development in the Mediterranean, including as a possible approach for the sustainable development and blue growth of small island developing States, which shared some of the same vulnerabilities, challenges and opportunities. She noted that the establishment of a network of marine protected areas and the development of sustainable blue growth, based on the European Union Blue Growth strategy, were priorities for the region. She observed that strategic planning and local involvement were critical to any success, as was good governance that ensured a balanced integration of the environmental, social and economic dimensions.

78. The Coordinator of the EAF-Nansen project at the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Kwame Koranteng, focused on measures to strengthen the knowledge base for sustainable development in fisheries. He described how the ecosystem approach to fisheries incorporated the three dimensions of sustainable development and described the history, structure and objectives of the project and the results achieved in terms of developing an ecosystem approach to fisheries management, developing capacity and collecting data. He noted the need for a well-functioning fisheries administration to have regular processes in place to monitor the extent to which a fishery had moved towards achieving the desired objectives, as well as the human and financial resources necessary to follow up on agreed management actions.

79. The head of the Marine Policy and Regional Coordination Section at the UNESCO Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission, Julian Barbière, considered the need for marine science and the transfer of marine technology. He expressed concern over the gap in scientific capacity between countries, which could be addressed by identifying regional and subregional focal points and the transfer of marine technology. He described the criteria and guidelines on the transfer of marine technology, adopted by the Assembly of the Commission in 2003, and the potential for a clearing-house mechanism. He also highlighted the development of a global ocean science report, whereby the capacity needs and opportunities in ocean science would be assessed, and the establishment of the OceanTeacher Global Academy to provide training courses relating to Commission programmes worldwide.

80. The Senior Nutrition Adviser at the WorldFish Centre, Bangladesh, Shakuntala Haraksingh Thilsted, explained that many low-income countries would be unable to achieve optimal levels of capacity-building without strategic regional collaboration and partnerships, drawing on examples in particular from Bangladesh. She

underlined that capacity-building with enhanced integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development required a people-centred community approach, based on human rights, equity and good governance at all levels, and the involvement of a range of stakeholders from various sectors. She emphasized that a long-term, sustained effect of capacity-building required a focus on educating young people. She noted that the use of new technology, such as cellular phones, had transformed access to knowledge, creating growing awareness in communities.

81. The Senior Environmental Specialist at the Global Environment Facility (GEF), Nicole Glineur, described the activities of GEF in supporting the sustainable management of ocean activities, including the international waters programme, the programme on global sustainable fisheries management and biodiversity conservation in the areas beyond national jurisdiction and the large marine ecosystems project. She elaborated on the role of resource mobilization in supporting the integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development and provided some examples of how the three pillars had been integrated into initiatives financed by GEF.

(b) Panel discussions

82. The benefits of restoring and protecting ocean ecosystems as a major driver for job growth and overall socioeconomic development across multiple sectors in various oceans-related industries were highlighted. Mr. Hudson noted the challenges and high costs in regulating activities that were largely land-based, but also described new business opportunities for innovators. In particular, he described the potential for a new technology industry in ballast water treatment and explained that, while ship companies would need to invest in ballast water systems, there were clear opportunities for emerging companies, growth in research and development and job creation. A representative highlighted in that regard the value of the blue economy in driving economic growth and environmental protection.

83. With regard to fisheries, noting the efforts of the parties to the Nauru Agreement to restrict access to fisheries in their exclusive economic zones, a representative asked whether that had had a positive impact on the tuna fishery in the Pacific. Another representative emphasized the importance of the conservation of tuna stocks in the Pacific and of cooperation among States in the region and regional fisheries management organizations, in order to achieve the sustainable development of tuna fisheries, including by supporting initiatives to combat illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing. In that context, Mr. Aqorau described the history of the tuna fishery in the Pacific, in which prohibiting fishing in pockets of the high seas had been made a condition for access to the fishery resources in the exclusive economic zones of the adjacent coastal States and the resulting economic benefits to coastal developing States. He noted the applicability of such schemes to other fisheries, but also highlighted the need for regional support and political will in the development of the governance framework, as well as in addressing challenges in fisheries management, such as ensuring compliance with agreed limits on access to fishery resources. He also described the need for effective monitoring, control and surveillance to ensure that States did not exceed fishing limits, including through the use of electronic reporting and independent audits. Mr. Aqorau further described dysfunctions in the decision-making architecture of regional fisheries management organizations, which had led to a decline in the level of fish stocks. He provided examples of regional fisheries management organizations in which the

parties had ignored scientific advice or been unwilling to take measures to achieve the conservation of the fishery resources.

84. Some representatives sought clarification on the challenges of instituting market-based arrangements, such as rights-based schemes, and on the key characteristics of such schemes and their possible application in other regions. Mr. Aqorau described the challenges in obtaining support for rights-based fisheries from market States. In the case of the parties to the Nauru Agreement, he stressed that only those countries that supported arrangements to shift rights to coastal States would enjoy the benefits of access to the resources of the countries that were parties to the Nauru Agreement. He observed that the success of the arrangement could be attributed in part to the financing generated by the scheme, which allowed for policy decisions to be made independently from donor objectives. The need for institutional support, as well as assistance with science and data gathering, was stressed. He further noted the benefits for developing coastal States of innovative approaches to the processing and marketing of fishery products, such as contract processing and fisheries certification. He also described the development benefits from innovative approaches to fisheries, such as allowing developing States to hold interests in foreign processing facilities, which could become part of their national economy.

85. Mr. Aqorau said closing off the high seas to commercial fishing could allow developing countries to supply all the raw materials and fish products for developed countries. Such an arrangement would allow developing States to become fully integrated into the world trading system and advance progress in achieving the sustainable development goals. A representative noted that such proposals raised delicate issues for many States, owing to the importance of fisheries for economic development. Problems of the overcapitalization of fishing fleets, following the establishment of exclusive economic zones, which had led to overfishing, and difficulties in access to fishery resources within the regulatory areas of regional fisheries management organizations were highlighted. Those issues were complex and there were continuing efforts to address issues relating to fishing subsidies under the auspices of the World Trade Organization (WTO).

86. The discussion of the need for effective governance of small-scale fisheries was welcomed as timely by some representatives, who expressed concern over the disadvantageous position of small-scale and artisanal fishers in most countries, as well as the challenges to their being stronger participants in, and beneficiaries of, sustainable development efforts. In particular, the challenges posed by conflicts between small-scale fishers, fishers with larger capacity and industrial fisheries were noted. Further information was sought on what action had been taken in Africa to resolve such conflicts successfully. Ms. Motta observed that small-scale fishers were not considered to be major contributors to gross domestic product, had a very low level of participation in decision-making and were not well represented. That being the case, other fishers with stronger representation were able to fish, without any restriction, in areas that were predominantly used by small-scale fishers, thereby depriving them of benefits and livelihoods. In addition, the increase in oil and gas exploration and other extractive industries, which appeared to be accorded priority over other development activities, as well as boundary issues and migration to coastal areas, had resulted in the dilution of the customary rights of small-scale and artisanal fishers and their displacement. To resolve the situation, she stressed that spatial planning and enforcement, together with the granting of exclusive tenure

rights, strengthening the participation of small-scale fishers in decision-making and increased political will were crucial.

87. In that regard, a representative observed the need for customary or traditional fishing rights to be supported by Governments through legal means or by-laws and customary tenure, such as those in the Pacific region.

88. The opportunity for building a more holistic governance of ocean activities at the global and regional levels was stressed. Examples were provided of transboundary cooperation, including the Coral Triangle Initiative and the establishment of transboundary marine protected areas based on the migratory patterns of marine turtles. Ms. Qiu stressed the importance of such transboundary cooperation, given the interconnected nature of marine ecosystems. Mr. Mahon highlighted the need to identify existing platforms that had the scale and geographical scope to address such issues, as had been done in the case of the wider Caribbean regional ocean governance framework. Noting that transboundary cooperation was also essential from a scientific perspective, Ms. Qiu highlighted a report on marine sustainable development published by the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation secretariat as a way to improve collaboration among regional scientists.

89. Fragmentation in the governance of ocean activities was identified by Mr. Mahon as an impediment to the integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development. With specific reference to conservation and sustainable use in areas beyond national jurisdiction, the view was expressed that proposals on the need for governance mechanisms and policy coherence to tackle the issue of fragmentation had to be legitimate to be successful. The importance of preserving the delicate balance struck in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea was underscored in that regard.

90. Consideration was given to the issue of the integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development through integrated national ocean policies. A representative noted that in the wider Caribbean region only 4 of 30 countries had an ocean policy at the national level, which resulted in an inherent difficulty in elaborating a regional ocean policy. With regard to the modalities for the development of national policies, Ms. Cicin-Sain noted the establishment of high-level inter-agency committees in various countries.

91. In response to a query on how to balance short-term priorities and long-term goals, Ms. Cicin-Sain referred to the example of the United States of America, where similar executive actions had been continuously implemented since 2004, changes in government notwithstanding. Mr. Becker-Weinberg noted that the law on marine spatial planning in Portugal ensured continuity in case of changes in government and incorporated a monitoring mechanism that required a report from the Government to the parliament every three years to determine, among other things, what action was being taken and whether targets, goals and deadlines were being met.

92. Representatives discussed the importance of consultations at the national and regional levels in the development of integrated policies and spatial plans. Addressing the modalities of consultations, Mr. Becker-Weinberg noted that stakeholder consultations in Portugal had involved both technical experts and political authorities. He further explained that the base law on marine spatial planning had been drafted by the Government following interdepartmental technical

discussions and adopted by the parliament following public hearings involving a wide cross section of stakeholders.

93. With regard to consultations at the regional level, including on developing marine protected areas and sharing limited resources for sustainable development, Ms. Velo noted that the Mediterranean was vulnerable but that the surrounding coastal States had adopted instruments to facilitate the sustainable use and management of that shared resource. In that regard, European Union directive 2014/89/EU, dated 23 July 2014, establishing a framework for maritime spatial planning and directive 2008/56/EC (see above), were highlighted. Both directives were aimed at achieving a good environmental status of the sea by 2020 and based on participation among different levels of Governments and the inclusion of other stakeholders, such as local communities. A third instrument was the trilateral 1999 declaration on the creation of the Pelagos sanctuary for the conservation of Mediterranean marine mammals. Reference was also made by several representatives to the Protocol on Integrated Coastal Zone Management in the Mediterranean to the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean (Barcelona Convention).

94. Several representatives welcomed the information regarding the process of developing and applying marine spatial planning to the conservation and sustainable use and governance of ocean activities. With regard to whether there was or should be a model scale of priority to determine whether some issues or uses should take precedence over others, or whether the scale could be adapted to suit each case or circumstance, Mr. Becker-Weinberg noted that that depended on how marine spatial planning was perceived by individual States. By way of example, he observed that in Portugal a mechanism for resolving conflicts concerning competing uses of the oceans had been developed, which took into account the specificities associated with the use of marine space for economic and development activities. In that regard, it was noted that the overriding consideration was that an activity would be supported only if it were deemed to be environmentally sustainable, following which other economic and social criteria would be considered, such as the potential for job creation, which was a national priority for Portugal. Thus, any mechanism of prioritization would need to depend on national priorities for development.

95. Several representatives, noting a shift from integrated coastal management to marine spatial planning for integrated coastal governance, asked whether the current international legal framework was adequate for marine spatial planning or integrated governance. Ms. Cicin-Sain noted that the integrated approach in the context of the management of exclusive economic zones was new and it was too early to determine whether there was a gap. Regarding areas beyond national jurisdiction, she noted that, as with experience in areas under national jurisdiction, cooperation between regional seas programmes and regional fisheries management organizations remained limited and area-based management would pose a challenge, given that no authority existed to establish such areas. It was noted that that was an issue subject to forthcoming negotiations on a legally binding agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea regarding the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction.

96. A question was raised as to how to bridge the gap between measures taken at the global and local levels and what an appropriate balance might be between global top-down and local bottom-up approaches. In response, Mr. Barbière noted that

measures at the regional level, for example, through the regional centres of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission or regional seas conventions and action plans, could play a role in bridging that gap. The point was made that integrated and cross-sectoral management should not be seen as a replacement for good sectoral management.

97. With regard to enabling measures, one representative noted that the transfer of marine technology was at the core of part XIV of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, which that representative considered to be the least developed part of the Convention in terms of compliance, to the detriment of developing States. In that regard, Mr. Barbière indicated that the work of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission on the issue was aimed at making the relevant provisions of the Convention operational. The benefits were highlighted of taking into account the clearing-house mechanism and funds for the transfer of marine technology in working towards implementation of the sustainable development goals.

98. One representative said that, in accordance with part XIII of the Convention, all scientific research activities in the oceans constituted marine scientific research.

99. One representative, noting the upcoming release of the first global integrated marine assessment under the Regular Process, suggested that the Commission should consider the relevant portions of that assessment on capacity-building needs in the preparation of its global ocean science report.

100. In response to clarification sought on the work of the Commission on taxonomy in areas beyond national jurisdiction, Mr. Barbière noted that the Ocean Biogeographic Information System was the largest repository of information of scientific knowledge on the oceans, including areas both beyond and within national jurisdiction. He also clarified that the Commission was working with the International Seabed Authority to see how taxonomy information on areas beyond national jurisdiction could benefit the work of the Authority. A question was also raised regarding the compatibility of GEF programmes covering areas beyond national jurisdiction with the work currently under way in the context of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Informal Working Group to study issues relating to the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction. In that regard, Ms. Glineur stated that GEF was working with regional fisheries management organizations on straddling fish stocks and highly migratory fish stocks under existing legal instruments, including the Agreement for the Implementation of the Provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks (Fish Stocks Agreement) and FAO instruments, and that the projects in question were aimed at applying tools and not developing legal instruments.

101. In response to a question regarding the collection of data under the EAF-Nansen project, Mr. Koranteng explained that a broad database of information had been compiled. The data belonged to the State in which they were gathered, but access could be given to others with the consent of the coastal State concerned. A new data policy of the project would make the data public after five years unless the rights holder objected. The focus of the Nansen project activities had evolved over time to match the needs of its beneficiaries, from looking for resources to develop fisheries, to assessment for fisheries management, to training scientists, to the application of

the ecosystem approach to fisheries. Data gathered through the project were also being used in new ways, such as in assisting environment ministries.

102. Support was expressed for decision-making on the basis of the best available science. It was observed, however, that the lack, or limited nature, of available scientific knowledge should not preclude decision-making. In response to a question regarding specific areas that should be accorded priority in the development of scientific expertise by developing countries, Mr. Barbière noted that, although there was no set hierarchy, some key areas and methodologies had been identified where the development of scientific knowledge was most cost-effective.

103. One representative sought clarification on the need for capacity-building for scientific research in establishing a regional framework for the governance of ocean activities, such as the wider Caribbean regional ocean governance framework. Mr. Mahon noted the difficulties in meeting the capacity needs of many smaller States in the region and stressed the need to rationalize where to develop that capacity and how to share it among States. The establishment of a regional university for scientific research could provide a solution in that regard.

104. Representatives discussed ways in which to improve capacity-building in matters relating to oceans at the local level. In particular, questions were posed regarding the possible role of technology, such as cellular phones, how to increase the participation of women in fisheries to increase productivity and how to tackle the impacts on the livelihoods of local communities when conservation and management measures were put in place. Ms. Thilsted provided an example of how technology and innovation could further the dissemination of information to local communities, in particular in their local languages. She also provided some examples of projects that had increased the role of women in the fisheries supply chain and noted that women in some countries were increasingly moving into traditionally male-dominated fields. She cautioned that it was necessary to monitor how those projects were being implemented as additional roles for women might result in an increase in their workload and the transfer of responsibilities to other members of the family. In terms of measures to mitigate the loss of livelihoods, training, the availability of microcredit and the possibility of conditional cash transfers were highlighted as possible tools. Ms. Glineur noted that GEF, the World Bank and national banks might have programmes to assist in developing some of those tools, including through temporary grants.

105. Some representatives noted the important role of experts in the process of developing indicators for the sustainable development goals, in particular the participation of national statistical commissions. The input from ocean experts from States and, when necessary, the advice of competent organizations of the United Nations system, were also regarded as beneficial to the process. One representative noted that indicators regarding fisheries subsidies, based on the various types of subsidies, could be useful and more effective in terms of accountability. Some representatives queried whether the contribution of fisheries to the gross domestic product of developing countries could be used as an indicator for sustainable development goal 14. In response, Mr. Aqorau noted that there were revenues that were not captured in gross domestic product and that developing States had diverse interests, including in all facets of the value chain, from rights holders to markets. Mr. Parmentier suggested that, in view of the forthcoming round of WTO discussions

in December 2015, the international community should request the revival of the discussions on fisheries subsidies on the basis of sustainable development goal 14.

106. Some representatives asked how indicators could be developed to address capacity development and knowledge and technology transfer for marine science, and how to make them both meaningful and measureable so as not to overburden developing countries. Mr. Koranteng acknowledged the difficulties in developing appropriate indicators and stated that the basic elements could consist of measuring what actions were taken and their effect and effectiveness. Mr. Barbière noted that a single indicator might not suffice and suggested a composite index, including factors such as scientific infrastructure, investment in science and scientific interaction at the international level.

107. Following up on the reference to difficulties in enforcing targets deemed overly ambitious, Ms. Qiu explained that the challenge stemmed in part from centralized decision-making by people who were not fully aware of conservation needs and with insufficient involvement of local stakeholders and communities to ensure transparency and a regular review of the effectiveness of marine policies.

108. In response to questions regarding the proposal by the Global Ocean Commission to establish an independent ocean accountability board, Mr. Parmentier explained that the idea had been inspired by the Financial Stability Board, which had been established in 2009 following the financial crisis. He indicated that the question of the composition of such a board remained open, but that it could consist of independent persons who could assess progress towards ocean conservation and report to the international community. One representative said that such an accountability regime was not a convincing idea. Indicators would be used to assess progress. In addition, the representative stressed that accountability was linked to the transfer of technology and financing for development.

109. One representative asked whether there was a link between the proposed board and the proposal made by a representative to hold a series of triennial meetings to assess progress in implementation of sustainable development goal 14. Mr. Parmentier observed that, while there was no such connection, some linkages could partly resolve the problem of fragmentation of governance of ocean activities.

Agenda item 4

Inter-agency cooperation and coordination

110. The Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs made a statement in his capacity as the focal point for UN-Oceans, providing information on the activities of UN-Oceans since the fifteenth meeting of the Informal Consultative Process.³

111. He stated that UN-Oceans had continued to work towards the identification of possible areas for collaboration and synergies, as mandated in the revised terms of reference and within the context of its work programme for 2014-2015. In that regard, the first step of developing an inventory of mandates, priorities and current and planned activities of the members of UN-Oceans had been completed, with the identification of relevant mandates. Members were proceeding to the further elaboration of the inventory in the form of a user-friendly online searchable database, developed and funded by FAO, which would be made available on the UN-Oceans

³ The full statement is available from www.unoceans.org/documents/en/.

website (www.unoceans.org) as soon as the initial inventory of activities was completed. The next step, facilitated by the online database, was to identify synergies or joint activities illustrating existing and possible areas for collaboration. He noted that continued updates and fine-tuning of the inventory, including increasing its user-friendly operation, would require sustainable funding. In that regard, he indicated that, to date, no contributions earmarked for UN-Oceans had been made to the trust fund established for the Office of Legal Affairs by the Secretary-General to support the promotion of international law, as referred to in resolution 69/245. He invited Member States and others in a position to do so to make such contributions.

112. He said that, apart from teleconferences, UN-Oceans had, upon a suggestion by members to hold a face-to-face meeting every other year on a rotation basis at the headquarters of one of its members, convened one such meeting on 20 March 2015 at IMO headquarters in London.⁴

Agenda item 5

Process for the selection of topics and panellists so as to facilitate the work of the General Assembly

113. The Co-Chairs introduced item 5, noting that it reflected paragraph 292 of General Assembly resolution 69/245. Representatives were invited to provide their views and make proposals on ways to devise a transparent, objective and inclusive process for the selection of topics and panellists, so as to facilitate the work of the General Assembly.

114. The Director of the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea then provided an update on the status of the voluntary trust fund for the purpose of assisting developing countries, in particular least developed countries, small island developing States and landlocked developing States, to attend the meetings of the Informal Consultative Process. It was pointed out that the trust fund played an important role in facilitating the participation of representatives and panellists from developing States. The Director recalled that the General Assembly in its resolution 69/245 had encouraged Member States to make financial contributions to the trust fund, in order to ensure that it maintained a workable balance.

Agenda item 6

Issues that could benefit from attention in the future work of the General Assembly on oceans and the law of the sea

115. The Co-Chairs recalled that the General Assembly had, in paragraph 298 of resolution 69/245, decided that the Informal Consultative Process would focus its discussions at its seventeenth meeting, in 2016, on marine debris, plastics and microplastics. They drew attention to the composite streamlined list of issues that could benefit from attention in the future work of the Assembly on oceans and the law of the sea and invited comments from representatives. The issue of fishery subsidies, as contained in the list, was highlighted by one representative. The Co-Chairs invited any representative wishing to propose additional issues for inclusion in the list to submit them to the Co-Chairs or to the Secretariat in writing before the end of the current meeting.

⁴ The report of the meeting will be made available at www.unoceans.org.